8-15-2012 12:00 AM

Working Toward Transformation and Change: Exploring Non-Aboriginal Teachers' Experiences in Facilitating and Strengthening Students' Awareness of Indigenous Knowledge and Aboriginal Perspectives

Sarah B. Burm
The University of Western Ontario

Supervisor
Rosamund Stooke
The University of Western Ontario

Graduate Program in Education
A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Master of Education

Working Toward Transformation and Change: Exploring Non-Aboriginal **Teachers' Experiences in Facilitating and Strengthening Students' Awareness** of Indigenous Knowledge and Aboriginal Perspectives

(Spine title: Working Toward Transformation and Change)

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by

Sarah Burm

Graduate Program in Education

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

CERTIFICATE OF EXAMINATION

Supervisor	Examiners
Dr. Rosamund Stooke	Dr. Rachel Heydon
Supervisory Committee	Dr. Jason Brown
Dr. Brent Debassige	Dr. Lina Sunseri

The thesis by

Sarah Burm

entitled:

Working Toward Transformation and Change: Exploring Non-**Aboriginal Teachers' Experiences in Facilitating and Strengthening Students' Awareness of Indigenous** Knowledge and Aboriginal Perspectives

is accepted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Education

Date_____ _____
Chair of the Thesis Examination Board

Abstract

This study explores non-Aboriginal teachers' accounts of ways in which they integrate Indigenous knowledge and perspectives into their teaching within the parameters set by the Ontario official curriculum. Ontario policy-makers and educational stakeholders have acknowledged the need to incorporate Aboriginal perspectives and content into curriculum and school communities, as reflected in documents such as the Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework (2007). Nevertheless, non-Aboriginal educators continue to seek opportunities to advance professional growth and vocational clarity regarding their practice. Utilizing narrative inquiry within a case study approach, the study provides a space in which Aboriginal learners inform secondary school educators about their schooling experiences and discusses ways in which non-Aboriginal teachers approach the task of facilitating Aboriginal perspectives in the classroom. The findings indicate that non-Aboriginal secondary school educators are working to incorporate Indigenous knowledge into their pedagogical practice more now than in the recent past. Nevertheless both students and teachers are concerned with the overall reach and impact given its limited incorporation across subject areas other than history or social studies. More investment still needs to be made to ensure Indigenous knowledge and its pedagogies both in a local and broader context are identified as a valuable knowledge system.

Keywords: Aboriginal education, Indigenous education, culturally responsive schooling, decolonization, critical pedagogy

Acknowledgments

To my thesis supervisor, Rosamund Stooke, thank you for your guidance, support, and encouragement throughout this journey of 'unlearning'. To Brent Debassige, thank you for sharing your incredible insight with me throughout the preparation and writing of this thesis. From this experience and working with you both, I have become a more reflexive researcher.

To my mother, Dianne Burm, words cannot describe how grateful I am to have you in my life. You have made many sacrifices in your own life to enable me to dream big. I thank you for your unconditional love and support during these last two years.

Thank you to my dear friends who have provided me with many words of encouragement throughout these past two years. I am fortunate to be surrounded by such intelligent and caring people. In particular, I would like to thank my friend Dawn Burleigh, who has been a ‘critical’ friend to me since our days teaching in Northern Ontario. You continually push me to think bigger and dig deeper, even when I so desperately want to resist. You truly are an incredible teacher.

Dedication

To the students of 3B. You continue to inspire me everyday to be a better teacher and a better person.

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction to the Research Problem

Introduction

Reflection: Spring 2010

Uncomfortable is the only word I can use to describe how I felt the day I introduced the new social studies unit, early settlements in Upper Canada to my grade three students. Despite my best efforts to prepare for today's lesson; I was nervous. Prior to arriving in Northern Ontario to teach, I knew very little about Aboriginal people, their histories, and their cultures. Even now, having taught in a First Nations community for two consecutive years, I was hardly an expert. How was I going to teach my class about the ways in which First Nations people helped early European settlers when I didn't know myself? It felt unsettling that I, the outsider, who was very much the modern day settler in this small First Nations community had the responsibility of teaching Aboriginal students about their own history and culture. Was I not about to perpetuate the wrongdoings from the past? But what was the alternative? I took a deep breath and reminded myself that it was only one lesson so just get through it and then you never have to do this again, until next year of course…

Situating Myself in the Research

As a non-Aboriginal teacher who has worked in a First Nations community I have witnessed how important it is for students to have their identities and cultures affirmed. Nevertheless, differences in my educational experiences in comparison to my students made it difficult for me to recognize the need for my students' identities and cultures to be acknowledged and validated. I struggled to identify and create opportunities for my students' to introduce their experiences and knowledge into the classroom. Throughout my years as a student, I never questioned the possibility that the structure of the educational system in which I had been educated might have benefited some people while not others. I had found educational success through this system so why not others? It was not until I had become a teacher that I was forced

to reconsider this question. Prior to my arrival in Northern Ontario, I was never motivated to question my own pedagogical practices and beliefs surrounding the purpose of schooling for Aboriginal students, let alone consider the implications these practices and beliefs might have had on my students' cultural identities and sense of self. As the above vignette illustrates, as an outsider to the First Nations community I felt my hands were tied. What could I do to change the situation? As a teacher, I faced many challenges. I was bound to curriculum expectations, time was finite, and teaching resources were unsatisfactory. The list of reasons why I could not change the situation far outweighed any reasons why I should.

Throughout my first year of teaching and even into my second year, I was not aware of, nor was I receptive to the opportunities available for individuals to learn, share, and build upon each other's "funds of knowledge" (Moll, 1992). Unfamiliar with the community's history, cultural values, and beliefs, I was hesitant to reach out to community members for help. In a large part, I think my hesitation to connect with the community was rooted in fear, a fear that I would have to confront how little I knew about Aboriginal history and culture. I was afraid of what I did not know. With new knowledge comes the responsibility to no longer turn a blind eye, but was I ready for this new responsibility? New to the teaching profession, I was unsure of my readiness but I knew I had to try to learn more. Throughout the remainder of my time teaching in Northern Ontario I participated in a process of "unlearning" (Wink, 1997, p. 14) that involved re-examining my perspective on issues of oppression and my participation in a legacy of oppressive practices. Through this process I began to recognize the disconnection between curriculum, teaching pedagogies, and the needs of systemically marginalized students.

The Research Problem

The Canadian educational system is an example of an institution where power is distributed disproportionately among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups. Built and sustained by Eurocentric ways of knowing and Eurocentric perspectives, the educational system's most serious problem, "lies not in its failure to liberate the human potential among Indigenous peoples, but rather in its quest to limit their thought to cognitive imperialistic practices" (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 86). For so long Aboriginal people have endured subjugation in the educational system resulting in a loss of language and culture. Consequently, Indigenous knowledge and worldviews are subordinated by Eurocentrism in schooling environments (Battiste & Henderson, 2000). This systemic marginalization continues to negatively impact Aboriginal learners. There are substantial educational gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations which lead critics to argue that in "forcing assimilation and acculturation to Eurocentic knowledge, modern governments and education systems have displaced Indigenous knowledge" (Cherubini, 2010, p. 12).

In addition to challenging the dominance of Eurocentrism in schooling, it is vital to examine the specific elements of instruction that influence Aboriginal students' success and well-being. As a teacher, I am particularly interested in the development and strengthening of teachers' professional efficacy (Heydon & Stooke, 2012; Kanu, 2005). As Harper (2000) found, non-Aboriginal teachers in particular, feel unprepared, having not received appropriate leadership and training around Aboriginal traditions and practices, as well as knowledge of the historical and current challenges affecting Aboriginal peoples ability to attain educational success. As a result, teachers may experience confusion concerning the nature and purpose of schooling for Aboriginal students.

Today's Students, Tomorrow's Future: The Applicability of the Study to Educational Scholarship and Practice

Aboriginal student struggles with academic achievement has been identified by the Ontario Ministry of Education as one of the leading challenges facing Aboriginal student learning in Canada (Stanley, 2010). As the proportion of Aboriginal children and youth beginning school and eligibility for entry into the workforce continues to increase, it is important to examine how the current educational system acknowledges the needs and diverse experiences of Aboriginal people. (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007). Although many Aboriginal students demonstrate proficiency in understanding their cultural background, these same students are often identified as 'at-risk' (Heydon & Iannacci, 2008), depicted in government publications in "deficient" terms that highlight "higher absenteeism and lower achievement scores and graduation rates" (Cherubini, 2010, p. 13). If the aim is to empower Aboriginal students, to strengthen their voices and have their cultural experiences affirmed, then emphasis needs to be placed on establishing education *in* Native culture. A transformation in education needs to occur where "the relationship between Indigenous knowledge and Eurocentric knowledge in the educational system must be sensitive to both ways of knowing" (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 92). Only when a commitment to respecting and understanding diverse ways of knowing is established and sustained can a living, dialogical relationship with the world and with each other occur. Thus my inquiry seeks to address the following questions:

- What are the views of post-secondary Aboriginal students about the ways in which Indigenous knowledge and Aboriginal perspectives were presented in their school experiences?

- In what ways are non-Aboriginal secondary school educators facilitating and strengthening students' awareness of Indigenous knowledge and Aboriginal perspectives in the classroom?
- In what ways do teachers' communicative practices facilitate and constrain Aboriginal students' cultural identity?

My study focuses on using Aboriginal learners accounts of their schooling experiences to inform the pedagogical practices of secondary school teachers. Additionally, my study investigates how non-Aboriginal teachers approach the task of facilitating Aboriginal perspectives in the classroom. Like all students, Aboriginal learners' experiences of education will be influenced by many individuals including school administrators, teachers, parents, peers, and community members. However, the reality is that many Aboriginal students receive most of their formal schooling from non-Aboriginal teachers. According to Taylor (1995), "ninety per cent of Native children in Canada will, at one time or another, be taught by a non-Native teacher" (p. 224). This will have an impact on their identities, their perceptions of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal interactions, as well as their understanding of the interrelationship between school, culture, language, and community. Thus, it is important for non-Aboriginal teachers to explore their own beliefs and attitudes towards people from cultural groups other than their own. As Delpit (1995) reminds us, if, as teachers we are to successfully educate all children, then we must "have knowledge of children's lives outside of school so as to recognize their strengths" (p. 172). My study invites non-Aboriginal educators who are involved in this kind of "border work" (Haig-Brown, 1992, p. 96) to examine how they organize and negotiate their professional identities.

Finally, my study aims to advance my understanding of Aboriginal students and supports future work in professional development opportunities for educators working with Aboriginal learners. This study aims to contribute insight into how teachers and students can create opportunities to build awareness of Indigenous knowledge and Aboriginal perspectives within the current curriculum in Ontario. Much of the current educational research portrays Aboriginal students and their experiences of schooling through a deficient lens, perpetuating what Cohen and Lotan (2004) describe as the "perception that they are intellectually incompetent" (p. 736). By inviting post-secondary students to reflect on their lived experiences, the opportunity is available to influence attitudinal change among educational gatekeepers and encourage youth empowerment through the sharing of Aboriginal learners' stories.

Thesis Overview

This thesis is organized in six chapters. In Chapter One I situate myself in the research, explaining how my personal and professional experiences have led me to exploring the research problem in its current educational context. In Chapter Two I examine research and other scholarly literature pertaining to the following four areas: the legacy of colonization and its impact on the educational experience of Aboriginal students, culturally responsive schooling, the role of teachers in facilitating and strengthening students' knowledge about Aboriginal culture and perspectives, and Aboriginal students' expectations and perspectives on their experiences of schooling. Chapter Three describes my theoretical framework and methodology. I elaborate on the philosophical ideas that shaped critical pedagogy as a movement in education and discuss my decision to conduct a narrative case study. In Chapter Four I present and analyze data from both student and teacher interviews. I elaborate on this discussion in Chapter Five by discussing in greater detail the many tensions students and teachers encountered as they navigated the

borderland where Indigenous knowledge meets and interacts with Eurocentric knowledge. Finally, in Chapter Six I provide recommendations for policymakers, administrators, and teachers on how to address the challenges of incorporating Aboriginal perspectives into the curriculum.

A Note about Terminology

According to Smith (1999) the terms Indigenous and Aboriginal are viewed as problematic in that "both appear to collectivize many distinct populations whose experiences under imperialism have been vastly different from one another" (p. 6). In this thesis I use the word Indigenous in reference to the many diverse communities, language groups, and nations in a broader context. When making reference to a specific Canadian context and/or population I use the term Aboriginal. According to the Government of Canada (2010) "Aboriginal people is a collective name for the original peoples of North America and their descendants" (Aboriginal Peoples and Communities section, para. 1). The Canadian constitution recognizes three groups of Aboriginal people: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. However an ongoing debate continues around the identification of specific labels such as 'Aboriginal' as a way of identifying many diverse communities, language groups, and nations. Many feel terms such as Aboriginal only perpetuate further colonization and limit the opportunities for individuals to identify within a single grouping. To address these concerns among participants throughout the writing of this thesis, I used terminology which was consistent with how my participants identified themselves.

I define curriculum broadly in this research study to refer to what happens in a classroom as situated in a yet broader field constituted by discourse, text, words, and ideas. Pinar (2008) points out that the field of curriculum is interested in "the relationships among the school

subjects as well as issues within the individual school subjects themselves and with the relationships between the curriculum and the world" (p. 6).

For the purposes of this thesis, I view curriculum as experience where knowledge is allowed to develop and evolve. According to Dewey (1916) "the educative process is a continuous process of growth, having as its aim at every stage an added capacity of growth" (p. 54). From this perspective, it is important to consider the context through which curriculum has been experienced and how these lived experiences contribute to a person's understandings of their educational experiences. Using Aboriginal learners' accounts of their schooling experiences, this research study will examine how-non-Aboriginal teachers' approach the task of incorporating Aboriginal perspectives and culturally appropriate content into their pedagogical practices within the parameters set by the Ontario official curriculum.

Chapter Two: Square Peg, Round Hole: Understanding the Incompatibilities between Western School Structures and Indigenous Knowledge and Values

Introduction:

This chapter presents a review of the literature related to my research questions. Documented in the literature is substantial evidence of the devastating impact of colonization and how its legacy continues to impact Aboriginal students' experiences of schooling. It points to a need for transformative educational opportunities by exploring the topic of culturally responsive schooling (CRS), considering both the contributions and criticisms surrounding CRS. Finally I examine literature related to the relationships between non-Aboriginal teachers and Aboriginal students in educational contexts.

The Legacy of Colonization and its Impact on the Educational Experience of Aboriginal Learners

Schooling is perceived as providing individuals with the opportunities and skills required for social and economic success. For many Aboriginal people, however, schooling reinforces patterns of inequality. Publications such as Barman, Hébert, and McCaskill's (1986) *Indian Education in Canada, Volume 1: The Legacy* and the report of the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal People* (1996) have been instrumental in bringing to the forefront the history of education of Aboriginal people since the arrival of the first Europeans in Canada. Both publications outline in great detail the legacy of education for Aboriginal people, emphasizing the shift in education from cultural continuity and individual responsibility to the creation of residential schools which were established to culturally assimilate Aboriginal people into the dominant culture.

The pervasiveness of imperialism is also important to consider when examining the exploitation and subjugation of Indigenous peoples (Smith, 1999). As Smith (1999) suggests, the exploitation experienced by Indigenous peoples—be it through economic expansion of European settlers, the promotion of new ideologies, and colonialism continues to position Indigenous peoples and their worldviews as inferior.

Indigenous scholarship is providing a counter-narrative to the dominant culture's interpretation of Canada's history. Explicit in the Indigenous discourse are stark, first hand testimonials written by individuals who have witnessed the impact of colonialism as it continues to devastate many Aboriginal communities. Most notably colonialism has impacted the sustainability of Indigenous knowledge and languages and the representation of Aboriginal people and perspectives in Canada's public education system.

What is Indigenous Knowledge?

Often in discussions surrounding Indigenous ways of knowing the question, "What is Indigenous knowledge?" is often raised by individuals seeking to understand a cognitive system different from what they are familiar. Indigenous knowledge, according to Kincheloe and Steinberg (2008) exists as a "multidimensional body of understanding" representing

> a lived form of reason that informs and sustains people who make their homes in a local area. In such a context, such peoples have produced knowledges, epistemologies, ontologies, and cosmologies that construct ways of being and seeing in relationship to their physical surroundings. Such knowledges involve insights into plant and animal life, cultural dynamics, and historical information used to provide acumen in dealing with challenges of contemporary existence. (p. 136)

According to Battiste (2005), Indigenous knowledge is an extensive and valuable knowledge system.

> Covering both what can be observed and what can be thought…Indigenous knowledge thus embodies a web of relationships within a specific ecological context; contains linguistic categories, rules, and relationships unique to each knowledge system; has localized content and meaning; has established customs with respect to acquiring and sharing of knowledge…and implies responsibilities for possessing various kind of knowledge. (n.p.)

However, since the occupation of Aboriginal land by Europeans, and the destruction and reorganization of Aboriginal cultures and societies, Indigenous knowledge has "been viewed by Euroculture as inferior and primitive" (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 2008, p. 136). Battiste (2005) highlights this, identifying how Indigenous knowledge has been "understood as being in binary opposition to 'scientific', 'western,' 'Eurocentric,' or 'modern' knowledge" (n.p).

Feelings of wariness toward Indigenous knowledge prevail in Canadian schools, as evidenced by the absence of Aboriginal viewpoints in certain curricula and the positioning of Aboriginal people as inferior. According to Dion (2000), references made to "images of tipis, tomahawks, beads, and buckskins by teachers and students reveal a dehumanized thinking about First Nations people and their histories....Such representations reflect an understanding of history that supports the forgetting of past injustices and their implications for the present" (p. 343). Brant Castellano, Davis, and Lahache (2000) echo these concerns, acknowledging how conventional curricula gives "legitimacy to particular versions of history, ways of knowing, and sets of ideas" (p. 252). By presenting content as "a static set of data about Indian and Inuit

people (Levitt, 1995, p. 127) some educators fail to take into account the continuous development of Aboriginal culture from the past to the present. Battiste and Henderson (2000) make a similar point by noting how most existing educational systems identify Indigenous heritage and the transmission of Indigenous heritage practices as inadequate, or if present, are representative of Eurocentric perspectives that are often "inaccurate and not very nourishing" (p. 88). Such concerns are exacerbated on a national level, evident in a national student awareness survey administered by the Coalition for the Advancement of Aboriginal Studies (CAAS) measuring Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students' awareness, attitudes, and knowledge of facts about Aboriginal peoples' histories, cultures, worldviews, and current concerns. Results showed that more than 50 per cent of all first year university and college students surveyed did not have an adequate opportunity to learn about Aboriginal peoples' histories and cultures in elementary and secondary school (Coalition for the Advancement of Aboriginal Studies, 2002).

As demonstrated above, the devaluation of Indigenous knowledge and cultural practices continues to manifest itself in current education initiatives aiming to identify "one best remedy" (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 92) to support the success of Aboriginal students. Rather than focus on Indigenous student enhancement—a central theme in Indigenous knowledge—Eurocentric efforts have been concerned with defining what the 'right' knowledge is and measuring how this knowledge is used (Battiste & Henderson, 2000).

Battiste (1998) uses the term "cognitive imperialism" to describe a form of "cognitive manipulation used to discredit other knowledge bases and values and seeks to validate one source of knowledge and empower it through public education" (p. 20). Battiste goes on to argue that "cognitive imperialism denies many groups of people their language and cultural integrity and maintains legitimacy of only one language, one culture, and one frame of reference" (p. 20).

Considering the underpinning values of Indigenous worldviews, it becomes clear why Aboriginal students often associate their experiences of schooling with feelings of disengagement and alienation.

> In the one culture, all attention is on the goal; the assumption is that it will be difficult to attain, but that the obstacles are worth overcoming. In the other culture, eyes and ears attend to what is happening now; this is the desirable strategy, successful in and of itself. (Levitt, 1995, p. 135)

How are Aboriginal learners to move toward self-determination and regain a sense of cultural identity if their educational experiences continue to impose mainstream values? In Canada, the proportion of Aboriginal youth, ages 15 and over, who do not complete high school is 40 per cent, compared with 13 per cent of non-Aboriginal youth (Statistics Canada, 2006). According to Cherubini, Hodson, Manley-Casimir, and Muir (2010), Aboriginal students struggle in public schools because their cultural and linguistic traditions are not represented. The values that define and shape Aboriginal epistemologies are negated and situated within competing mainstream tensions.

Centralized control of curriculum has only perpetuated and legitimated discriminatory school practices. As Stein (2001) points out, approaches to childhood, especially in education, have increasingly become a "cult of efficiency, where standardization, narrow curricula, and high surveillance are the drivers of cost efficiency; children being seen as just another form of capital" (as cited in Heydon & Iannacci, 2008, p. 18). As a result, students' self-worth is often determined by what they produce in compliance with societal norms. For Aboriginal students and their families who may not identify as belonging to the dominant culture, they fall at a disadvantage because they are not familiar with the rules of Western culture, thus experiencing

significant learning challenges and difficulty in establishing a sense of identity within a school community (Cherubini et al., 2010). Bennett and Bennett (1986; 1993) refer to these feelings of being "caught between" two languages and cultures as "intercultural marginality" (as cited in Atleo & Fitznor, 2010, p. 19). Examples such as this remind us that educational equity is not about providing the same education to all learners; it is about the accessibility and suitability of the education, recognizing and building upon the cultural strengths of diverse learners.

The Need for Transformative Education Opportunities

It is imperative to recognize and understand the nearly worldwide oppression that Indigenous cultures have endured and the ongoing challenges that Indigenous people continue to face as they work to restore their languages and knowledges (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008). According to Battiste (2005) Indigenous knowledge can be the educational remedy "that will empower Aboriginal students if applications of their Indigenous knowledge, heritage, and languages are integrated into the Canadian educational system" (n.p.). Nevertheless, as Brant Castellano, Davis, and Lahache, (2000) declare, "the promise of an education that delivers the skills to survive in a post-industrial global economy while affirming the ethical and spiritual foundations of Aboriginal cultures is far from being fulfilled" (p. xvi). Considerable work remains in finding successful ways to implement new policies, guidelines, and curricula. More importantly, schools need to make it their priority to develop materials and resources that serve their own student populations (Coalition for the Advancement of Aboriginal Studies, 2001).

With momentum increasing on a national and international scale acknowledging the historical and current inequality that exists between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, advocates for Indigenous education argue that there is no better time than now to commit to a process of learning that is transformative. As Battiste (1998) reminds us:

> The need is great for a transformed education that enriches our character and dignity, that emerges from one's own roots and cultural experience, from which a voice once powerless can be raised, and where diversity is seen as an asset, not a source for prejudice. (p. 22)

It is time to acknowledge the needs and diverse experiences of cultural and linguistic minorities, where differences among students are acknowledged and validated. There lies an opportunity to encourage different ways of knowing from all students and educators, Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal; inviting them to take what they have learned from their own experiences and use it to reinterpret and reflect on the world around them.

Culturally Responsive Schooling

What does it mean to teach in a culturally responsive manner?

Policymakers and mainstream government officials acknowledge the need to incorporate Aboriginal perspectives and content into school processes (Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003) but how effective are these initiatives in creating a culturally sensitive school environment for Aboriginal students and communities? According to Castagno and Brayboy (2008) culturally responsive schooling (CRS) has been considered a promising strategy for improving the education and increasing the academic achievement of Aboriginal students. Culturally responsive schooling emerges out of other, even broader bodies of literature focused on cultural difference, and on improving the academic achievement of youth who are not members of the dominant cultural group. Scholars have offered various definitions and interpretations of CRS. The Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools (1998) places emphasis on bridging

students' experiences in school with their lives outside of school through experiential learning opportunities.

> By shifting the focus in the curriculum from teaching/learning *about* cultural heritage as another subject to teaching/learning *through* the local culture as a foundation for all education, it is intended that all forms of knowledge, ways of knowing and world views be recognized as equally valid, adaptable and complementary to one another in mutually beneficial ways. (p. 5)

In the above definition, emphasis is placed on recognizing and drawing on students "funds of knowledge" (Moll, 1992), the skills, abilities, ideas, practices, or bodies of knowledge that students have developed and accumulated in their out of classroom experiences. In turn, educators gain a stronger understanding of the students they serve and are able to provide their students with learning opportunities that represent and validate their lived experiences.

In order for educators to engage in CRS, they need to have a cultural understanding of the students they serve. This is especially important when teaching Aboriginal students. The experiences and cultural backgrounds of Aboriginal people are very diverse, as is evidenced by the different languages and customs that exist. In order for culturally responsive schooling to be successful, educators need to be willing to engage in a process of cultural understanding. The Thompson Rivers Handbook for Educators of Aboriginal Students' (2010) outlines a cyclical, four-stage process teachers need to navigate through in order for cultural understanding to occur. Since culture is dynamic and constantly changing, these stages of cultural understanding are not meant to be followed in sequential order. Rather these stages of understanding will often overlap given the knowledge and perspectives held by the viewer. The first stage involves educators

understanding the importance of their students' cultural identity. As the handbook outlines, "cultural identity is fundamental to how people see themselves and the world" (p. 45). Thus, it is the responsibility of all educators to ensure their students have access to culturally affirming learning opportunities that work to restore and/or enhance their belief in themselves.

Additionally, it is important for educators to be culturally competent. Diller and Moule (2005) define cultural competence as "mastering complex awarenesses and sensitivities, various bodies of knowledge, and a set of skills that taken together, underlie effective cross-cultural teaching" (p. 5). As Castagno and Brayboy (2008) indicate, becoming a culturally competent educator "is a constant process that requires flexibility and adaptability on the part of the educator depending on the particular students and contexts with which they are working" (p. 947).

Furthermore, it is necessary for educators to be culturally aware. According to the Thompson Rivers handbook, "cultural awareness involves educators providing opportunities for people of different cultures to get to know one another better, which includes understanding visible and invisible aspects of culture (content) and the interactions between cultural groups (process)" (Thompson Rivers University, 2010, p. 46).

The last stage involves educators being culturally sensitive. This requires educators to be cognizant of their words and actions and how these behaviours may respect and/or perpetuate cultural differences. "Cultural sensitivity towards Aboriginal peoples includes an understanding of different worldviews and belief systems, gender roles, effect of intergenerational trauma, and different values and customs" (Thompson Rivers University, 2010, p. 46). Taking the initiative to acknowledge Aboriginal history and culture through the above stages enables educators to

forge a new relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, one that focuses on mutual respect and reciprocity.

What does culturally responsive schooling look like?

Central to understanding culturally responsive schooling is giving consideration to all aspects of the schooling process. Castagno and Brayboy (2008) highlight that in order for CRS to be successful, attention needs to be given to a number of important elements that relate to curriculum, pedagogy, school policy, student expectations, standards, assessment, teacher knowledge, and community involvement. The remainder of this literature review will examine in greater detail literature pertaining to curriculum, pedagogy, teacher knowledge, and student expectations and perceptions of their schooling and how these elements address or inhibit CRS for Aboriginal students.

Culturally responsive curriculum.

Belgarde, Mitchell, and Arquero (2002) define culturally responsive curriculum "as that which generally validates the cultures and languages of students and allows them to become co-constructors of knowledge in the school setting" (p. 43). The Alaska Native Knowledge Network (1998) has developed its own cultural standards for curriculum to ensure local cultures and languages are represented in school curricula:

- A culturally responsive curriculum reinforces the integrity of the cultural knowledge that students bring with them.
- A culturally responsive curriculum recognizes cultural knowledge as part of a living and constantly adapting system that is grounded in the past, but continues to grow through the present and into the future.

- A culturally responsive curriculum uses the local language and cultural knowledge as a foundation for the rest of the curriculum.
- A culturally responsive curriculum fosters a complementary relationship across knowledge derived from diverse knowledge systems.
- A culturally responsive curriculum situates local knowledge and actions in a global context. (pp. 13-16)

The above standards suggest that curricula must be reflective of students' lives and representative of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Curricula should also portray Aboriginal histories and cultures of both the past and the present accurately (Agbu, 2001; Skinner, 1999). The intent of cultural standards for each school, community, and related organization is to review these standards, determine their appropriate application within each unique learning environment, and generate new standards to reflect local circumstances (The Alaska Native Knowledge Network, 1998). Being able to see the connections between who they are, what they value, and what they are learning in school is imperative in order for students to make sense of their learning.

Culturally responsive pedagogy.

> Knowledge is not secular. It is a process, derived from creation, and as such, it has a sacred purpose. It is inherent in and connected to all of nature, to its creatures, and to human existence. Learning is viewed as a life-long responsibility that people assume to understand the world around them and to animate their personal abilities. Knowledge teaches people how to be responsible for their own lives, develops their sense of relationship to others, and helps them model competent and respectful behavior. (Battiste, 2002, p. 14)

Essential to Aboriginal approaches to teaching and learning is the emphasis placed on life-long learning:

> Indigenous teachings provide that every child, whether Aboriginal or not, is unique in his or her learning capacities, learning styles, and knowledge bases. Knowledge is not what some possess and others do not; it is a resourceful capacity of being that creates the context and texture of life. Thus, knowledge is not a commodity that can be possessed or controlled by educational institutions, but is a living process to be absorbed and understood. (Battiste, 2002, p. 15)

Indigenous pedagogy places emphasis on students' ability to "learn independently through observing, listening, and participating with a minimum of intervention or instruction" (Battiste, 2002, p. 15). Ensuring all students, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal have sufficient time to "connect with their learning in their own way of knowing" (Curwen- Doige, 2003, p. 153) is also important. Curwen-Doige emphasizes the necessity of spirituality in delivering culturally responsive education for Aboriginal students. Described by Curwen-Doige as the

"missing link" (p. 144) that makes traditional Aboriginal education and the Western system of education compatible, focusing on students' spirituality requires educators to create a safe, relational learning environment, beginning with "what the student knows and wants known by others" (p. 154). Drawing on one's spirituality is viewed as a resource that "facilitates knowing oneself, one's surroundings, and finding meaning for oneself in connection or relation to those surroundings" (p. 147). The growth of one's spirituality comes from bridging connections with one's intellect and physical self. Thus, culturally responsive pedagogy focuses on the continued nurturing of these areas throughout the course of a student's life:

> Who a person is, his or her ideas, thoughts, motivations, and understandings about life meanings and corresponding actions are what matter. Education that provides for personal development and understanding so that students are able to make sense of their worlds and live contentedly is education that helps students grapple with their own values and that will encompass a student's culture as well. (Curwen Doige, 2003, p. 152)

Goulet's (2001) study exploring effective teaching of Aboriginal students in the classroom reaffirms Curwen Doige's research on the relatedness of spirituality to learning. Holistic teaching requires educators to recognize "what happens in school cannot be separated from the daily lives of teachers and students or the communities where it takes place" (p. 80). Such an approach differs from Western pedagogical approaches to education which focus on a cultural construction of knowledge built on Eurocentric origins and definitive truths. As Battiste (2002) points out, Western pedagogical approaches to education do not examine the

> asymmetrical structure of curricula that exclude Aboriginal knowledges, languages, and histories while affirming Eurocentric knowledges, languages, and histories. They do not

> study how the mandatory educational system, with its Eurocentric curriculum and teaching style, become a system of control and imposed superiority when it is forced on Aboriginal students and their lives. (p. 17)

However, there is room for optimism as progress is being made in the administration, content, and methods of Aboriginal education (Battiste & Henderson, 2009). This is demonstrated by the local management of schools throughout many Aboriginal communities, the increase of Aboriginal people assuming an influential place in regional school boards and diverse educational systems, and policymakers and educational stakeholders acknowledging the need to incorporate Aboriginal perspectives and content into curriculum and school communities. New pedagogical strategies in education have also emerged to address the deficiencies that exist in school curricula and to move beyond schools' tendencies to essentialize Aboriginal culture toward the variability of Aboriginal culture and the cultural change and continuity across time. For example, models such as the CAAS Learning Cycle and Proposed Learning Expectations (2001) aim to deconstruct stereotypes related to Aboriginal people while creating opportunities for educators and students to begin filling the gaps in understanding and awareness around Canada's Aboriginal people. The Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) has also been committed to redefining how success is measured in Aboriginal learning through the creation of a Holistic Lifelong Learning Model. For First Nations people, the purpose of learning is to honour and protect the earth and ensure the long-term sustainability of life. To illustrate the organic and self-regenerative nature of First Nations learning, the Holistic Lifelong Learning Model uses a stylistic graphic of a living tree. As the CCL (2007) describes, "The tree depicts the cycles of learning for an individual and identifies the influences that affect individual learning and collective well-being" (n.p.).

In addition to learning models rooted in Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing, there exist other pedagogical approaches that aim to meet the needs of systemically marginalized youth. Described by Kumashiro (2002) as a "process of explicitly trying to read against common sense" (p. 62), anti-oppressive education occurs when students and teachers begin reading texts in multiple and anti-oppressive ways:

> This may involve students learning to read for silences and the effects of those silences on the "meaning" of a text or by examining their desire to read in particular ways and their resistance to reading in other ways, while beginning to understand that some reading practices are desired because they are more comforting (though more oppressive) than others. (p. 62)

Related to this pedagogical approach is anti-racist education, which St. Denis (2007) explains, "explores the practices, processes, and ideologies of racialization…not only how racism disadvantages some but also how racism advantages others and how whiteness gets produced and constructed as superior" (p. 1087). Common to all of the pedagogical approaches mentioned above is the shift away from the "celebration of culture" approach which neglects to keep non-Aboriginals accountable to on-going discriminative practices, toward a learning approach where immediate attention is given to critically examining the systemic problems related to colonization and racism; issues that continue to subjugate Aboriginal people to the margins. Emphasis within these pedagogical approaches involves collectively asking, how can we all take responsibility for understanding and changing the social, economic, and political conditions Aboriginal people are situated within?

Criticisms surrounding culturally responsive approaches to school.

It is important for teachers to "infuse the curriculum with rich connections to students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds within family and community contexts" (Belgarde, Mitchell, and Arquero, 2002, p.43). However, as mentioned earlier, the presence of Eurocentric knowledge throughout the mandated provincial and territorial curriculum paints a different picture, one where Indigenous knowledge has long been "ignored, neglected, or rejected… as primitive, barbaric, and inferior" (Battiste & Henderson, 2009, p. 6) in comparison to Eurocentric traditions and conventional educational systems.

In recent years educational stakeholders have attempted to establish a different representation of Aboriginal people in the curriculum through multicultural education. According to Banks (2010), taking a multicultural approach to education aims to provide all students—regardless of the groups to which they belong, such as those related to gender, ethnicity, race, culture, language, social class, religion or exceptionality an equal opportunity to learn in school. Viewed as an educational reform movement and process requiring a reconstruction to the total school or educational environment, the development and growth of a multicultural curriculum and integration of multicultural content has been limited due to ideological and political resistance; a belief that the "dominant mainstream-centric curriculum supports, reinforces, and justifies the existing social, economic, and political structure" (Banks, 2010, p. 236). Such limitations cause scholars to question the impact that multicultural education has on engaging students in recognizing the complexities of First Nations cultures. Often emphasis is placed on "cultural dissection" (Dion, 2000, p. 352) whereby students study the clothing, types of shelter, religious beliefs, recreation, music, and dance of various First Nations. Although entertaining for students, Dion (2000) contends the multicultural "Celebrating Our

Differences" approach to teaching about Aboriginal people runs the risk of perpetuating existing stereotypes about Aboriginal people. Students leave school with little knowledge of how relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people originated, the impact colonialism has had on First Nations communities in Canada and its implications for Aboriginal people today. Such challenges are also evident throughout teacher training institutions.

> Few teacher training institutions have developed any insight into the diversity of the legal, political, and cultural foundations of Aboriginal peoples, often treating Indigenous knowledge as though it were a matter of multicultural and cross-cultural education. Consequently, when educators encounter cultural difference, they have very little theory, scholarship, research, or tested practice to draw on to engage Aboriginal education in a way that is not assimilative or racially defined, as opposed to being legally and politically shaped by constitutional principles of respect for Aboriginal and treaty rights. (Battiste, 2005, n.p.)

An examination of current school and university curricula across Canada reiterates similar findings. The CAAS (2001) describes, "assumptions of European superiority continue to be an organizing force for the selection of the content to which we expose the children and adult learners" (p. 33). As the CAAS report explains,

> Little of no valid information about Indigenous cultures, worldviews, and contemporary issues is presented in mandated curricula except perhaps, that as a society, we are confused about the relationship between Aboriginal Peoples and Canada... policy makers have striven to ensure that each class (dominant=Canadian settlers; marginalized=Aboriginal Peoples) is prepared, shaped, molded, for its role in the overall

> social structure. One social group in Canada must be taught superiority and the other inferiority, but both are taught from the same book. (pp. 38-40)

According to the CAAS, absent are areas of study that speak directly to "land ownership issues, treaties, relocation of Aboriginal Peoples, and the colonial and neo-colonial acts of segregations and discrimination against the Original Peoples" (p. 40). Current curriculum according to Battiste (2002) fails to examine the culture of school itself and in turn, what counts as knowledge and truth and what does not.

> They do not study, what, or whom, the curriculum and pedagogy represses, excludes, or disqualifies. Nor do they examine who continually benefits from education, and how these students are consistently regarded and nourished in schools where white privilege is normalized. (pp. 16-17)

Moreover, cultural awareness education does little to disrupt ideologies of racial superiority and inferiority. Although it is often understood in mainstream thinking that the effects of colonization and racialization can be addressed by affirming and validating the cultural traditions and heritage of Aboriginal peoples as St. Denis (2007) explains, these efforts have limitations:

> Cultural revitalization encourages misdiagnosis of the problem. It places far too much responsibility on the marginalized and oppressed to change yet again, and once, again, lets those in positions of dominance off the hook to be accountable for ongoing discrimination. (p. 1085)

Subsequently, efforts to provide non-Aboriginal people with an understanding of the big picture—the context of socioeconomic and cultural oppression that Aboriginal people have

historically experienced and continue to face through cultural awareness training—can lead non-Aboriginal people to resent and resist Aboriginal people, "encouraging the belief that cultural difference of the Aboriginal Other is the problem" (St. Denis, 2007, p. 1086).

Efforts have been made by scholars in the area of Indigenous knowledge to build synergy between Indigenous epistemology and pedagogy and Euro-Canadian epistemology and pedagogy in efforts of creating an "innovative Canadian educational system" (Battiste, 2002, p. 21) where the perspectives of Indigenous knowledge are held at the same level of intellectual legitimacy and authority as its Eurocentric counterpart. Nevertheless, the blending of Indigenous knowledge with Eurocentric knowledge raises the continuing concern of whose knowledge is validated in educational enterprises. Thus, the pedagogical challenge of Canadian education is not just "reducing the distance between Eurocentric thinking and Aboriginal ways of knowing but engaging decolonized minds and hearts" (Battiste, 2002, p. 22).

The Role of Teachers in Facilitating and Strengthening Students' Knowledge about Aboriginal Culture and Perspectives

In addition to challenging the dominance of Eurocentrism in defining and shaping school knowledge, it is vital to examine the specific elements of instruction that influence Aboriginal students' success. Of importance is the discussion surrounding the role of teachers in facilitating and strengthening their students' knowledge of Aboriginal people and the political and social issues that impact their lives. Many educators hold low professional efficacy beliefs regarding their ability to incorporate Aboriginal perspectives into their practice. Professional efficacy according to Kanu (2005),

> refers to security in the professional knowledge base that teachers need in order to be able to implement the integration of Aboriginal cultural perspectives into the curriculum (e.g., knowledge about Aboriginal culture, topics, and issues and knowledge about effective pedagogical strategies that are successful with particular Aboriginal students). (p. 64)

In her review of the literature regarding Indigenous knowledge and pedagogy in First Nations education, Battiste (2002) confirms this, having found that "preparation for teaching Indigenous knowledge and languages is the most pressing issue for teachers" (p. 25). Many teachers have not received the support and resources required to deliver appropriate educational programming. Additionally, for teachers working at schools with few Aboriginal students, school administrators do not feel it is justified to provide staff with the appropriate resources given the student population they serve (Coalition for the Advancement of Aboriginal Studies, 2002).

Time also becomes an issue as increasing pressure and restraints are placed on teachers. For teachers new to the profession, they are managing the competing elements and tensions in their work, by making choices or "engaging in triage, attending to an immediate set of education priorities (curriculum expectations) while delaying another (Aboriginal content) that they know 'should' be present" (Wotherspoon, 2006, p. 691). Furthermore, the emergence of new policy or program directives requiring teachers to broaden their understanding and incorporation of cultural issues, have little effectiveness without adequate resources, and mechanisms in place to support these initiatives (Hewitt, 2000). Wotherspoon's (2006) study explores the changing landscape of teachers' work shaped by reforms aimed at improving educational attainment for Aboriginal people in Canada's Western provinces. Wotherspoon found teachers' experiences and responses to balance curriculum related responsibilities and broader student and community focused issues diverse and often contradictory. While some teachers responded favourably to

initiatives aimed at supporting Aboriginal students and felt their teaching to be enhanced as a result of their teaching becoming more holistic and inclusive, others saw their role to deliver the school's mandate primarily in technical terms. As Wotherspoon (2006) describes, "they [teachers] see their role to deliver the curriculum in a manner that employs a universal standard independent of students' cultural heritage or any other background factor; working with Aboriginal students makes no difference to their teaching" (p. 686).

According to Harper (2000), teachers struggle to "define their work and themselves in relation to the political, social, and geographical context in which they [find] themselves" (p. 154). Wotherspoon (2006) echoes these concerns from teachers who question how effective schools can be, even when substantial accommodations are made by teachers and school administrators, given the prevalence of racism; the intergenerational impact of residential school; limited social, employment, and recreation options; and other non-pedagogical factors. Even when schools and districts provide in-service opportunities and other resources to support their work, "the extent to which these services are effective or even taken advantage of is limited" (Wotherspoon, 2006, p. 690; see also Heydon & Stooke, 2012). In his study exploring teachers' perceptions of the integration of Aboriginal cultural knowledge and perspectives into the teaching of the Manitoba high school curriculum, Kanu (2005) highlights how teachers emphasized the need for change in school culture in order for cultural integration to succeed. Battiste (2002) attributes teachers' struggle to incorporate Aboriginal perspectives into their own pedagogical practices to their own educational upbringing:

> All teachers have been educated in Eurocentric systems that have dismissed Indigenous knowledge and pedagogy. What Indigenous content these systems do offer—in the

> disciplines of anthropology, linguistics, or history, for instance—have been developed in the contexts of culturalism or racism. (p. 25)

Furthermore, current literature shows that cultural dissonance between non-Aboriginal teachers and Aboriginal students appears to be one of the main contributors impacting Aboriginal students' empowerment in the classroom. This is demonstrated in Fuzessy's (2003) study which examines perceived teacher role definitions in educating Inuit students in Nunavik. Fuzessy found that cultural dissonance often occurred "unconsciously in non-Inuit teachers, at both the individual community, and societal levels" (p. 202). Although the conscious intentions of non-Inuit teachers centered on the success of their Inuit students, the influence of mainstream culture still permeated the thoughts and actions of non-Inuit teachers, as well as their teaching style and curricula.

The issue of cultural clash described in Fuzessy's (2003) study can be found in many examples of Aboriginal students' experiences in school. The values of the two cultures exist in opposition to one another, with different levels of importance assigned to cultural practices versus the value of education. As a result, relationships of misunderstanding and mistrust materialize, only widening the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

Recognizing that the continuing effects of oppression and colonization are situated in, and affected by, the complex historical contexts of culture, race, and class is an integral beginning step. This is especially true if teachers are to respectfully and accurately facilitate and strengthen Aboriginal students' understanding of Indigenous knowledge and Aboriginal perspectives. Also noteworthy is the emphasis placed on relationship building and the development of trust between teachers and their students. Of key significance in Goulet's (2001) study was the commitment made by teachers to move beyond the colonial power relationships

that dictated past relationships toward the building of collaborative partnerships that extended beyond classroom walls to parents and community members. The effects of colonization and attention to issues of poverty, substance abuse, violence, racism, and class conflict were not overlooked and did not result in teachers' thinking less of the students or their families. Rather, teachers attended to these issues through their teaching and expectations for engagement and participation. Goulet's study exemplifies how recent research is contributing to the strengthening of teachers' pedagogical practice by providing teachers' with support on how they can address the impact of colonization on their students in a respectful, sensitive way that encourages student success, develops confidence and builds positive self-esteem.

In her book *braiding histories: Learning from Aboriginal Peoples' Experiences and Perspectives*, Dion (2009) investigates the (re)presentation of Aboriginal peoples' lived experiences through teachers' pedagogical practices. Through an empirical study of how texts offering an Aboriginal perspective of post-contact history were taken up in the classroom by three non-Aboriginal intermediate teachers, Dion's project investigated how the teachers comprehended and used the stories in each of their classrooms. The intentions of this project were about "uncovering the issues and challenges that educators confront when they take up the task of teaching and learning from Aboriginal subject material" (p. 13). Dion's findings revealed how colonialism and Eurocentric thought is not just embedded in current infrastructures but *in* the people who participate and engineer those infrastructures that guide our actions. To acknowledge and confront such realizations requires individuals to engage in a process of "difficult learning" (Brtizman, 1998, p. 117). This process of learning requires opportunities for educators to "learn about and to 'learn from' the history of the relationship between themselves and Aboriginal people" (Dion, 2009, p. 190). It is only through such a process that teachers can

begin to disrupt the destructive and deeply ingrained colonial attitudes and patterns of behavior that permeate the educational system.

Aboriginal Students' Expectations and Perspectives on their Experiences of Schooling

According to Battiste (2002), the central purpose of integrating Indigenous knowledge into Canadian schools is to "balance the educational system to make it a transforming and capacity-building place for First Nations students" (p. 29). However, much of the current literature surrounding Aboriginal students and their experiences in school portray students from a deficient perspective, speaking for students rather than including their explicit perspectives. In reviewing the literature I found a substantial amount of research describing the conditions that contribute to Aboriginal students' lack of educational success (Battiste, 1998; Cherubini et al, 2010; Ireland 2009). However, few studies sought Aboriginal students' perceptions on their own issues and in particular on how they perceive educational success.

Of the few studies incorporating Aboriginal students' narratives is Bazylak's (2002) study highlighting Aboriginal students' perceptions of their own success. Utilizing participants' stories and experiences to highlight positive factors contributing to educational transformation for Aboriginal students, Bazylak's research provides educators with insight into factors that encourage success for Aboriginal students in school. Students' responses found that factors such as family involvement, the development of self-identity, school support programs, and spiritual support contributed to their educational attainment. Engaging curriculum also contributed to students' success but for these students curriculum was not just course content but "included recognition of varied learning and teaching styles" (p. 144). The most important factor contributing to student success was strong, healthy relationships with teachers. Of significance is

the development of volition that student participants identified as important for achieving success. As Bazylak (2002) describes, "the development of volition allowed the participants to examine themselves in relation to the world. This examination led to the self-realization or decision to change the direction of their lives" (p. 138). Bazylak's study reinforces for teachers the importance of establishing caring relationships in order to support the development of students' volition.

Another study that incorporates the voices of Aboriginal youth is Hare's (2011) study examining the educational experiences of First Nations youth who attended both reserve and public schooling. Hare's study highlights the academic divide that exists for Aboriginal youth who attend school through their reserve school systems and then transfer to public high schools. Aboriginal youth carry with them different "funds of knowledge" (Moll, 1992) and like many culturally and linguistically diverse students are often targeted as being deficient, lacking in particular skills and knowledge as perceived by those institutions and groups who are in power. Mainstream curriculum and pedagogies utilized in public schooling serve only to further marginalize Aboriginal youth. Moreover, Hare's findings highlight the need for further research to examine racism and its effects on Aboriginal youth. Such assaults on culture experienced by Aboriginal students cannot be examined in isolation to the issues surrounding curriculum and pedagogy as they each contribute to a larger social system around schooling. Changes must take place in each of these areas in order to create and sustain an empowering school culture and social structure.

Conclusion

In my review of the literature surrounding culturally responsive approaches to school and the teacher's role in engaging in a process of cultural understanding, what I failed to find were articles that discussed the responsibility of teachers to participate in their own process of self-examination. As the literature demonstrates, little emphasis is placed on establishing education in Aboriginal culture. From a Canadian perspective, each province has direct control over curricula for schools in their province and through tuition agreements over public schooling of First Nations students, yet, as Battiste (2002) explains, "none of the provincial initiatives taken so far have integrated the expertise of the Aboriginal peoples in ways that are truly transformational" (p. 21). Current educational policies fail to acknowledge the social, economic, and political realities that permeate the educational experiences of Aboriginal students in Canada. These efforts maintain and extend the legacy of colonialism rather than break barriers down.

Reliance on students' voices as a tool for navigating the highly complex and often convoluted educational terrain would be beneficial to providing insight into what factors contribute to positive educational transformation. Further exploration is needed into whether teachers' view their professional role(s) as contributing to a positive learning environment for Aboriginal students'. This is especially pertinent for non-Aboriginal teachers who represent an increasing majority responsible for educating Aboriginal youth. My research contributes to this growing body of knowledge as I listen to the stories and experiences of post-secondary Aboriginal students and share their narratives with non-Aboriginal secondary teachers. Through this work it is my intentions to encourage non-Aboriginal educators to examine how their communicative practices promote and/or constrain the development of Aboriginal students' cultural identity.

Chapter Three

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Theoretical Framework

Introduction

Critical pedagogy evolved out of a yearning to transform those structures and conditions within society that prevented marginalized groups from overcoming the situation of their oppression. Critical pedagogy marked a significant attempt

> to bring an array of divergent views and perspectives to the table, in order to invigorate the capacity of radical educators to engage critically with the impact of capitalism and gendered, racialized relations upon the lives of students from historically disenfranchised populations. (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003, p. 2)

My study is informed by critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970; McLaren, 2007). In this chapter I elaborate on philosophical ideas that shaped critical pedagogy as a movement in education and identify some key theorists whose contributions to the development of critical pedagogical thought and practice support my study.

Tenets of Critical Pedagogy

Hegemony is a key construct employed in critical pedagogy. The construct was developed first by philosopher Antonio Gramsci (1971). With an interest in maintaining social control, hegemony refers to ways in which, the dominant group or groups in society implements norms, expectations, and behaviours, rewarding those who participate in and reinforce the behaviours, even if such behaviours are in contradiction to people's well-being. Gramsci also

pointed out that those who do not ascribe to such hegemonic notions of truth within society are often chastised for their resistance. Since Gramsci developed his theoretical ideas during World War II, educational researchers and scholars such as Foucault (1975), Apple (1979) and Giroux (1983) have worked to make visible hegemonic processes in schooling. Working within a Gramscian lens, some critical theorists have argued and shown how students are socialized through hegemonic practices that reproduce cultural and economic domination within society (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003) and ways in which schools function as sites in which hegemonic processes are at work. The work of Apple and scholars such as Anyon (2009) and McLaren (2007) shows that the culture of schooling is not a neutral enterprise but in fact designed to reflect, disseminate, and legitimize the beliefs and perspectives of the dominant group.

> The knowledge that now gets into schools is already a choice from a much larger universe of possible social knowledge and principles. It is a form of cultural capital that comes from somewhere, that often reflects the perspectives and beliefs of powerful segments of our social collectivity. In its very production and dissemination as a public and economic commodity—as books, films, materials, and so forth—it is repeatedly filtered through ideological and economic commitments. Social and economic values, already embedded in the design of the institutions we work in, in the 'forma corpus of school knowledge' we preserve in our curricula, in our modes of teaching, and in our principles, standards, and forms of evaluation. (Apple, 1979, p. 9)

Critical educators also draw on critical theories first developed by members of the Frankfurt School of philosophy. Darder, Baltodano, and Torres (2003) describe how the Frankfurt School responded to the political and historical transformations that were occurring in

the early part of the twentieth century. The Frankfurt School philosophers were concerned with the changing relationship between the political and economic spheres in a growing industrial-technological society. With independent socialist and liberal organizations falling increasingly victim to the struggle of domination in all forms, the Frankfurt School's work was driven by a commitment to the notion that "theory, as well as practice, must inform the work of those who seek to transform the oppressive conditions that exist in the world" (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003, p. 8).

Paulo Freire is considered by many to be the most influential educational theorist of the critical pedagogy movement. Freire (1970) examines how issues of power, culture, and oppression manifest within and perpetuate throughout contexts of schooling. He distinguishes between a "banking" concept of education and a "problem-posing" approach. In the "banking" concept of education students are seen as passive recipients of knowledge, where "the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filling, and storing the deposits" (Freire, 1970, p. 58). "Problem-posing" on the other hand, requires both teachers and students to participate in action and reflection as a means for influencing social change. As Freire explains, "the students—no longer docile listeners—are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher. The teacher presents the material to the students for their consideration, and re-considers his earlier considerations as the students express their own" (p. 69). For Freire, the purpose of education is to empower human beings to transcend the constraints placed on them by race, class, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, age, ability and other axes of social difference. Education serves to emancipate when individuals "develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation" (Freire, 1970, pp. 70-

71). Freire's work emphasizes the practice of freedom, whereby people are not independent and unattached to the world, but rather serve in relation to the world.

A central principle of critical pedagogy is the commitment "to the development and evolvement of a culture of schooling that supports the empowerment of culturally marginalized and economically disenfranchised students" (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003, p. 11). Culture and class are intricately linked and cannot be separated within the context of daily life in schools. In order for such transformation in classroom structures and practices to occur, educators require opportunities to participate in a dialectical thought process whereby they begin to critically examine their actions, values, and beliefs, and how these in turn, contribute to, or constrain democratic participation of all people. To *critically* examine one's position within society requires educators to disassemble their current perceptions of what society delineates as normative practices and beliefs. Britzman (1998) and Wink (1997) refer to this process as "unlearning". By unlearning, educators recognize their own complicity with oppression as well as how they may re-enforce oppression through the very ways in which they think and do things. By critically re-examining their standpoint towards issues of oppression, and 'disrupting' their commonsense view of the world, educators will be able to bring new readings and create new meanings to confront how disciplines of study are currently shaped and discussed.

Educators' cannot engage in a process of unlearning without being cognizant of the asymmetrical relations of power that historically and presently shape and influence their views of reality. According to Wink (1997) critical pedagogy "forces educators to look again at the fundamental issues of power and its relationship to the greater societal forces that affect schools" (p. 25). Critical pedagogy seeks to remind educators that the lenses through which they view

reality are socially constructed and often times normalized, that is, made to appear 'natural' in everyday life. Teachers should

> recognize how schools have historically embraced theories and practices that function to unite knowledge and power in ways that sustain asymmetrical relations under the guise of neutral and apolitical views of education—views that are intimately linked to ideologies shaped by power, politics, history, culture, and economics. From this vantage point, schools function as a terrain of ongoing cultural struggle over what will be accepted as legitimate knowledge. (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003, p. 11)

Critical pedagogy enables educators to recognize their own power and privilege as professionals and encourages them to ask "how and why some constructions of reality are legitimated and celebrated by the dominant culture while others clearly are not" (McLaren, 2003, p. 72). By deconstructing how one comes to think, work, and identify oneself within a social framework, educators can begin to see how the social institutions that govern their actions and ideas construct an idealized norm of conduct, or, way of seeing. Only then can a shift in social consciousness occur and transformations begin.

As noted above, critical pedagogy aims to interrogate the way power works to benefit some people and disadvantage others. Drawing on this foundation, my study has been influenced by several key ideas: dialogue, naming, and problem-posing.

Dialogue

> Human existence cannot be silent, nor can it be nourished by false words, but only by true words, with which men transform the world. To exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it...Men are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection. (Freire, 1970, p. 76)

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), Freire clearly articulates that in order to move toward a humanizing pedagogy, a permanent relationship of dialogue with the oppressed must be established. He elaborates on this, stating that "without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there can be no true education" (p. 81). Thus what does it mean to engage in authentic dialogue? What does it look like? According to Freire (1970), dialogue is:

> the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world. Hence, dialogue cannot occur between those who want to name the world and those who do not wish this naming—between those who deny other men the right to speak their word and those whose right to speak has been denied them. Those who have been denied their primordial right to speak their word must first reclaim this right and prevent the continuation of this dehumanizing aggression. (p. 77)

The above passage suggests that participation in authentic dialogue means engaging in a process that will result in a change within ourselves or our context. The focus of such conversation is not to win an argument, or to prove a point, but to be open to the possibility that "what-we-thought-we-knew" about a particular subject, issue, or experience "may-not-be-all-of-what-there-is-to-know." Wink (1997) expands on this notion by stating that dialogue is

> communication that creates and recreates multiple understandings. It moves its participants along the learning curve to that uncomfortable place of relearning and unlearning. It can move people to wonderful new levels of knowledge; it can transform relations; it can change things. (p. 36)

It is important for educators and students to have opportunities to engage in authentic dialogue. Such dialogue strengthens relationships, affirms individuals' "funds of knowledge" (Moll, 1992), and creates an environment where collaboration, respect, and reciprocity are valued and modeled.

Naming

As mentioned previously, critical pedagogy is concerned with unveiling implicit ideas within a given text in an attempt to examine the underlying political, social, and economic realities that pervade the larger society. Often, what goes unannounced has the power to maintain hegemonic ideas as truth. For example, in a classroom educational setting, dominant educational discourses determine what books are housed on classroom shelves, what pedagogical practices should be employed, and what values and beliefs should be transmitted to students (McLaren, 2003). These discourses and others, produced and reinforced by the dominant culture are often viewed and accepted as 'truths' rarely examined for the ways in which they might misrepresent or mediate social reality and silence particular groups in society. However, by engaging in critical pedagogies, teachers can begin to recognize the influence that power has on the generation and delivery of knowledge itself. This is what it means to name. To name is to overtly recognize that knowledge is not neutral but entrenched with preconceived truths that,

over time have been legitimated and perpetuated by the dominant culture to account as "real" and "natural".

Problem-posing

> The critical educator doesn't believe that there are two sides to every question, with both sides needing equal attention. For the critical educator, there are *many* sides to a problem, and often these sides are linked to certain class, race, and gender interests. (McLaren, 2003, p. 71)

In addition to dialogue and naming, critical pedagogy encourages teachers and students to question how their "everyday commonsense understandings—our social constructions—get produced and lived out" (McLaren, 2003, p. 72). As mentioned previously, critical pedagogy recognizes that certain types of knowledge carry more power and legitimacy than others. Thus, critical pedagogy seeks to question the social functions of knowledge. Such questions asked include:

- Whose interests does this knowledge serve? Who gets excluded as a result? Who is marginalized?
- How does school knowledge reinforce stereotypes about women, minorities, and disadvantaged peoples?
- How does the 'hidden curriculum' reinforce and maintain the existing distribution of power and knowledge in schools?

- How can school function as a means of empowering students around issues of social justice while simultaneously sustaining, legitimizing, and reproducing dominant class interests in its efforts to maintain social control?

By questioning the very structures and beliefs that inform educational experiences, both teachers and students are committing themselves to the development of a "critical social consciousness" or what Freire referred to as *conscientização* or conscientization (Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2003, p. 15). Conscientization is "the process by which students, as empowered subjects, achieve a deepening awareness of the social realities that shape their lives and discover their own capacities to re-create them" (Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2003, p. 15).

Engaging in a process of conscientization supports a problem-posing approach to education because the relationship between students and teachers remains dialogical in nature and the contributions and experiences of both groups are encouraged and valued. Conscientization enables students and teachers to engage in dialogue where their own knowledge, ability, and experiences are affirmed. Only through affirmation of our individual lived experiences and the experiences of others can we begin to recognize what it is that we don't know.

> We cannot and ought not escape our own history and memories, not if we are to keep alive the awareness that ground our identities and connect us to the persons turning for fulfillment to our schools…to engage with our students as persons is to affirm our own incompleteness, our consciousness of spaces still to be explored, desires still to be tapped, possibilities still to be open and pursued. (Greene, 2003, p. 111)

Conclusion

As mentioned above, the principles informing the study of critical pedagogy are heterogeneous in nature and dependent on contextual factors. How one *does* critical pedagogy, that is, how one undergoes the process of learning and relearning may vary. Nevertheless, as Wink (1997) so simply states, to *do* critical pedagogy is "to name, to reflect critically, and to act" (p. 104). By utilizing critical pedagogy as a lens through which to examine my data and reflect on my own lived experiences in teaching and learning, I have been able to name, reflect, and act on a problem that many teachers and students face in their own schooling experiences. My study provided a safe and inclusive space for teachers to participate in a process of conscientization and unlearning by utilizing dialogue as a means for personal reflection and professional development. Moreover, my study aimed to provide opportunities for students and teachers to 'answer back' and challenge the dominant discourses that have shaped their educational experiences. Within my study Aboriginal students and non-Aboriginal teachers participated in a process of 'naming' by reflecting on their personal and professional experiences in order to gain a deeper understanding of how their views of the world have been constructed and influenced.

Methodology

Introduction

In this qualitative research study I investigated how non-Aboriginal educators are incorporating Indigenous knowledge and Aboriginal perspectives into their teaching as a means for strengthening and facilitating students' understanding of Aboriginal people and their distinct histories within a Canadian context. Researchers conduct qualitative research "because we need a complex, detailed understanding of the issue" (Creswell, 2007, p. 40). Through conducting this study my intentions were to better understand how non-Aboriginal teachers are addressing the tensions of integrating Indigenous worldviews into their classroom pedagogy. The voices and experiences of Aboriginal students currently pursuing post-secondary studies were also presented throughout the course of my study as a means for inviting discussion among teacher participants.

Narrative Case Study

To address my research questions, I conducted a narrative case study involving non-Aboriginal secondary school educators and Aboriginal students pursuing post-secondary studies. According to Stake (2005), conducting a case study allows the researcher to "seek out both what is common and what is particular about the case" [whereby] "the end product of the research regularly portrays more of the uncommon" (p. 447). This proves to be integral to fostering a deep understanding of what is important about the particular case within its own world. My study explored perspectives on supporting Aboriginal students in a series of interviews with non-Aboriginal secondary school educators and Aboriginal students pursuing post-secondary studies. Talking to both teachers and students enabled me to explore multiple perspectives of the problem and identify common themes.

With a focus on understanding participants' experiences of educational life, utilizing narrative inquiry within a case study approach provided the opportunity to examine experience as continual, where "experiences grow out of other experiences and experiences lead to further experiences" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 2). Valued in this relational form of inquiry is the contribution of the researcher and the researched, as both are "in a relationship with each other and…both parties will learn and change in the encounter" (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 9). Within an Indigenous perspective, sharing one's story contributes to the co-construction of knowledge. As Kovach (2009) describes, "story is not only a means for hearing another's narrative, it also invites reflexivity into research. Through reflexive story there is opportunity to express the researcher's inward knowing" (p. 100). Through engaging in a dialectical process with participants I was able to pursue and reflect upon the thoughts, ideas, beliefs, and themes that had emerged from the literature and that had developed out of my own reflexivity. Listening to participants' stories offered me new insight into understanding my roles as both an educator and a researcher. By engaging in discussion with participants I acknowledged that I, as well as my participants brought a particular history and worldview to this study. Narrative research acknowledges that the life histories and worldviews shared between the researcher and researched are not static, existing only as mere moments in time, but rather as dynamic, where growth and learning are valued as part of the research process (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007).

As mentioned above, one of the major purposes for engaging in narrative research is to foster growth and transformation through retelling and reliving life stories. Utilizing narrative approaches enables exploration into the "challenges and rewards of working across social, cultural, and other boundaries" (Elbaz-Luwish, 2007, p. 371). Thus, in studying individual experiences, the researcher needs to be "constantly negotiating, constantly reevaluating, and

maintaining flexibility and openness to an ever-changing landscape" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 71).

Moving away from generalizability toward the power of particular, narrative inquiry encourages and accepts the existence of multiple ways of knowing. Rather than working toward determining a single kind of truth, I describe and seek understanding of human experience as it unfolds across time. I recognize that other possibilities, interpretations, and explanations with regards to one's lived experience were possible. By incorporating the lived experiences of both students and teachers into my study it was important to acknowledge that I am privileging individual lived experience. Nevertheless, I saw the lived experiences of my participants as providing valuable insight into the discussion around what it means to teach in a culturally responsive manner. I saw their stories serving as a catalyst to explore the participants (students and teachers) understanding of the interrelationship between school, culture, language, and community.

Recruitment

I began my data collection by speaking with Aboriginal students who were currently enrolled in post-secondary studies at a public college or university in southwestern Ontario. I recruited student participants by contacting Indigenous student services at both campuses, asking support staff to forward my request for student-participants to be a part of my study. I received email responses from six students who expressed an interest in participating in my study. Speaking to students in this demographic who were in the early stages of their post-secondary education provided me with insight into the presence (or lack thereof) of Indigenous knowledge and Aboriginal perspectives in schools during recent years. I listened to their personal reflections

regarding their lived experiences throughout elementary and secondary school. I was interested in how these experiences had shaped their cultural identity, knowledge of Indigenous issues, as well as their identities as learners.

With permission from the student participants, I then presented transcriptions of their stories to six non-Aboriginal secondary school educators. The teachers did not know the student participants involved. To recruit teachers I submitted a request to conduct research to a public school board in southwestern Ontario. After receiving ethical approval from the school board, I was invited to attend the board's Native advisory council meeting. I provided council members with an overview of my research study, my rationale, and hopes for ways in which my research might enhance culturally responsive education. This meeting created an opportunity to engage in dialogue about my area of study with school board administrators, educators, support staff, community members, and elders representative from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities within the board. Council members provided me with instructive feedback and gave me their approval and support to move forward with this study. In consultation with the school board, the decision was made that in lieu of releasing teachers during school hours to participate in the interviews, I would present my findings from this research at a professional development session following the completion of my study. From this meeting, I forwarded my letter of information to one of the superintendents from the school board who then, on my behalf, contacted secondary school principals throughout the board, informing them of my request to interview a non-Aboriginal teacher from each of their schools. Principals then approached teachers within each of their individual schools. Interested teachers contacted me through email where I then scheduled a time to conduct focus group interviews. I initially received responses

from seven teachers representative of secondary schools located throughout the school board, but due to inclement weather, was only able to interview six teachers.

Data Collection

According to Creswell (2007), when conducting a narrative study, "one needs to find…individuals who are accessible, willing to provide information, and distinctive for their accomplishments and ordinariness or who shed light on a specific phenomenon or issue being explored" (p. 119). As mentioned in the previous section, I was fortunate to find six student participants who were willing to share accounts of their lived experiences of schooling with me. Interviews with the Aboriginal students took place on the participant's school campus. I conducted and recorded oral history interviews with each of the Aboriginal students participating in the study. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) state that there are a variety of strategies for gathering participants' oral histories, ranging from "using a structured set of questions in which the researchers' intentions are uppermost to asking participants to tell their own stories in their own ways" (p. 111). For narrative inquiry to be a useful method of inquiry, research participants should feel that the researcher is "willing to listen to the story" (Kovach, 2009, p. 98). Furthermore, "by listening intently to one another, story as method elevates the research from an extractive exercise serving the fragmentation of knowledge to a holistic endeavour that situates research firmly within the nest of relationship" (2009, p. 99). I recognized that the students would each have unique experiences to share, and thus I wanted to ensure that there was opportunity for participants to speak freely and openly about their schooling experiences. To welcome the sharing of stories I utilized an approach in which I combined a standardized open-ended interview format with informal conversation (see Appendix A). Utilizing a combination approach enabled me to ask participants key questions about their experiences while leaving opportunity for "flexibility,

spontaneity, and responsiveness to individual differences and situational changes" (Patton, 2002, p. 343). Questions posed to student participants were intended to elicit responses regarding their overall schooling experiences throughout elementary and secondary school, their relationship with teachers, the representation of Aboriginal perspectives in their classes, and their beliefs about why some teachers make more effort to incorporate Aboriginal perspectives in their teaching than others. The opportunity for informal conversation allowed for further exploration into specific issues or themes that may have emerged during the interview. Moreover, the informality of the conversation allowed me to follow a participant's lead, often moving dialogue into new directions. I believe this in turn deepened communication with participants and allowed them to elaborate on their responses.

With the teacher participants, I conducted focus group interviews. According to Patton (2002) "a focus group interview is an interview with a small group of people on a specific topic. Groups are typically 6 to 10 people with similar backgrounds who participate in the interview for one to two hours" (p. 385). My rationale for using focus groups as opposed to conducting individual interviews was that focus groups could provide opportunities for participants to engage with colleagues in pedagogical discussion surrounding their teaching practices. As Patton states, "the object is to get high-quality data in a social context where people consider their own views in the context of the views of others" (p. 386). With the non-Aboriginal secondary school teachers participating in the study, I initially decided to conduct one focus group interview, made up of five to seven participants. However, given the differences in each teacher's availability, and time allotted for travel to and from the interview site, the decision was made to split the larger focus group into two smaller focus groups. Splitting my original focus group into two smaller focus groups meant that one of my groups had only four teachers while the remaining

group had only two teachers. Although the size of these new groups deviates from Patton's description of the preferred focus group number, I felt my participants were still able to communicate with interviewees in a cooperative manner that encouraged participants to engage in personal reflection regarding their individual teaching practices.

Focus group interviews took place at a secondary school within the school district. The interview questions were purposely broad (see Appendix B), allowing participants the opportunity to share their individual stories while "highlighting the uniqueness of each human action and event rather than their common properties" (Chase, 2005, p. 657). Utilizing an interview guide provided topics or subject areas within which I was then free to "explore, probe, and ask questions that [would] elucidate and illuminate that particular subject" (Patton, 2002, p. 343). I wanted to get a sense of participants' initial perspectives surrounding their teaching practice and the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge and Aboriginal perspectives into their teaching instruction. Throughout the focus group interview I wove in the students' stories as a strategy for furthering discussion among the teachers. Listening to the narratives of students enabled non-Aboriginal teachers to critically reflect on the ways in which they had come to define the world around them and how in turn, this impacted their teaching instruction.

Data collection conformed to Western University's ethical review requirements (see Appendix C) and the requirements of the school district. A letter of information and consent form (see Appendices D1 & D2) was distributed to all participants. Prior to conducting interviews with participants I went over the purpose of the study, the time needed to complete the interview, and plans for using the results from the interviews with participants. I instructed participants that participation in this study was entirely voluntary and that they may withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on their academic or employment status. Given the

personal nature of my research there was potential risk for student participants to experience discomfort as a result of talking about negative school experiences. To address this, I provided students with contact information for Indigenous services and psychological services available to them on their school campuses. Students were encouraged to seek out these services if any personal discomfort resulted from the interviews. Signed consent was retrieved and securely stored in a locked filing cabinet. In addition, each participant was offered a copy of the final report upon completion. Four of the student participants and all of the teacher participants were interested in receiving a copy of the final report. In order to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants in the study, all participant names and place locations were removed from the interviews once collected. Pseudonyms were chosen by student participants and I assigned pseudonyms to each of the teacher participants. Following the conclusion of transcription, all digitally recorded interviews were permanently erased.

Data Analysis

According to Stake (1995), "there is no particular moment when data analysis begins. Analysis is a matter of giving meaning to first impressions as well as to final compilations…we take our impressions, our observations, apart (p. 71). Stake's depiction of analysis and interpretation is consistent with the interpretive features of narrative inquiry. Although narrative inquiry begins with collecting accounts of individuals lived experiences, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) remind researchers that their task is to "discover and construct meaning in those texts" (p. 130). I carried out an inductive analysis of interview transcripts which, according to Patton (2002), "involves discovering patterns, themes, and categories in one's data" (p. 453). Outlined below are the steps I followed to complete my data analysis:

a) I began by reading through the field texts gathered from my interviews and making margin notes and forming initial codes. This involved reading and re-reading all of the field texts and identifying and categorizing them in an attempt to "see not just how each story could be understood on its own but how the stories related to each other rhetorically" (Eubanks, 2004, p. 37). This process of reading and re-reading field texts was necessary "in order to construct a chronicled or summarized account of what is contained within different sets of field texts" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 131).

b) Keeping in mind that it is the case I am aiming to understand, I then searched for meaning through categorical aggregation. Stake (1995) defines categorical aggregation as the "aggregation of instances until something can be said about them as a class" (p. 74). In my study this included an exploration of behaviour, issues, and contexts with regard to this particular case.

c) I utilized constant comparative method to achieve categorical aggregation. This process undergoes continuous refinement throughout the data collection and analysis process, continuously feeding back into the process of category coding. Throughout this process I went back and forth between the students' responses and the teachers' responses in search for meaningful patterns and connections between both groups' responses. At this point several different classification systems emerged. This happened most frequently when reviewing both students and teachers responses to the same question. I then went back to my initial groupings and compared observations within each group to look for similarities or differences within my data.

The fit between data and categories—the recursive process of developing categories was one of constant refinement that continued throughout the data analysis phase.

According to Kovach (2009), "for story to surface, there must be trust". (p. 98). In an effort to maintain trustworthy relationships with my participants and to include their voices and representations, I invited participants to review and approve the transcripts of the stories. Only one of the student participants and one of the teachers wanted to review the transcripts of their interviews. In both instances, neither participant requested any changes or omissions to the transcriptions. By fulfilling this responsibility, "the researcher ascertains authentic, ethical representation" (p. 100).

By approaching my study through the terms outlined above I sought to engage in a process of indigenization. Indigenization described by Chilisa (2012) is

> a process that involves a critique and resistance to Euro-Western methodological imperialism and hegemony as well as a call for the adapting of conventional methodologies by including perspectives and methods that draw from indigenous knowledges, languages, metaphor, worldviews, experiences, and philosophies of former colonized, historically oppressed, and marginalized social groups. (p. 101).

It was my intention in pursuing this study that both groups would examine their own positions within the greater power/knowledge relationship and seek out opportunities for empowerment. To this end, I sought advice from the work of Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) who's *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* has become an authentic text in this area. This topic is taken up in more detail in Chapter Six.

Critiques of Narrative Inquiry

Often researchers who utilize narrative inquiry approaches in their research are questioned for their reliance on interpretations of words rather than numbers. The assumption is often made that verbal data cannot generate the same level of consistency as numbers, and as a result, researchers are unable to assert reliability or validity. Yet, to return to the tenets of narrative inquiry, recording one's experience through personal descriptions and explanations is of utmost importance. In reply to critics of narrative research, narrative researchers question the ability of numbers to "reveal deep understandings about human interaction" (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 16). Moreover, the use of numbers exclusively in the representation of data may constrain the researcher from documenting an individual's unique account of experiences. As Stake (1995) contends, "the case will not be seen the same by everyone" (p. 64). Narrative inquiry recognizes "the value of the particular, the role of culture, and the value of the case" (p. 12). Focusing on the meaning of participants' responses with the intentions of bringing forward their voices, interests, and experiences, I utilized a critical-interpretive approach to generate new understanding for both the participants and myself. Aimed at "challenging and stimulating rethinking of established ideas, theories and social practices" (Alvesson & Billing, 2009, p. 43), critical-interpretive inquiry seeks to provide a deeper understanding of limited empirical phenomena through careful and insightful interpretation of the local situation or context. Throughout my study I have utilized critical-interpretive inquiry to encourage dialogue and reflection "in a way that generates open-mindedness" (p. 44).

Ethical Considerations

Throughout all phases of this study, it was important that I remain sensitive to ethical considerations. If "good research is a matter not only of sound procedures but also of beneficial aims and results" (Karl Hostetler, 2005, p. 17), then attending to ethical issues becomes imperative when conducting cross-cultural research involving human subjects.

In Aboriginal knowledge systems, it is important that the discussion of ethics move beyond referencing a set of rules to guide researcher behavior in a defined task. As Castellano (2004) points out, "ethics, the rules of right behavior, are intimately related to who you are, the deep values you subscribe to, and your understanding of your place in the spiritual order of reality" (p. 103). Thus, it was important that my research worked toward manifesting the Aboriginal ethic "that all aspects of the world we know have life and spirit and that humans have an obligation to learn the rules of relating to the world with respect" (p. 104). Castellano explains further: "Research that seeks objectivity by maintaining distance between the investigator and informants violates Aboriginal ethics of reciprocal relationship and collective validation" (p. 105). In order to achieve balanced, mutually-respectful partnerships between Aboriginal communities and researchers, it was integral that I respect the ethical obligations that go with entering into mutual dialogue with participants and understand that the exchange of knowledge received from participants "confirms a relationship that continues beyond the time and place of the exchange" (Castellano, 2004, p. 104). To achieve this, I relied on Lincoln and Guba's (1985) evaluative criteria for establishing trustworthiness within a research study. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthiness involves establishing

- Credibility - confidence in the 'truth' of the findings
- Transferability - showing that the findings have applicability in other contexts
- Dependability - showing that the findings are consistent and could be repeated
- Confirmability - a degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest (n.p).

My study could not have been conducted without the contribution of time and effort by participants. Thus, as a researcher it was important that I review how my participants could gain from the study. I needed to be sensitive to the potential of my research to "potentially exploit vulnerable population groups" (Creswell, 2007, p 44). This is especially important to recognize when working with Aboriginal people. Historically, research involving Aboriginal people has been defined and carried out primarily by non-Aboriginal researchers. In addition, some, research approaches have ignored Aboriginal worldviews and have not benefited Aboriginal people or their communities (Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), 2010). Thus, in working with Aboriginal people, it was important that my study "enhance their capacity to maintain their cultures, languages, and identities as First Nation, Inuit and Métis peoples, and to support their full participation in, and contributions to Canadian society" (CIHR, NSERC & SSHRC, 2010, p. 109). Throughout my findings I relied on thick description as a way of achieving external validity. Thick description relies on "rich, detailed, and concrete descriptions of people and places…in such a way that we can understand the phenomenon studied and draw our own interpretations about meanings and significance" (Patton, 2002, p. 438). It was important that variations in the experiences of both the students and teachers were illuminated and made the primary focus of this study.

Battiste and Henderson (2000) make reference to the fact that "most existing research involving Indigenous peoples and their worldviews is contaminated by Eurocentric prejudice" (p. 132). They elaborate on this contention by stating that, "ethical research must begin by replacing Eurocentric prejudice with new premises that value diversity over universality. Researchers must seek methodologies that build synthesis without relying on negative exclusions or on a strategy of difference" (p. 132). It was important that I conduct my study in a manner where my intentions and inherent bias as both a non-Aboriginal researcher and former classroom teacher were made visible to participants. From the onset of my interviews I shared with participants my lived experiences as a teacher working in a First Nations community. I recounted both the contentment and challenges I experienced as a new teacher and explained to participants how these experiences fueled my inquiry for this study. Furthermore, I acknowledged that my experiences have been informed and influenced by the perspectives of Eurocentric knowledge. I felt such disclosure on my behalf made explicit my purpose for pursuing this study. It is through my personal experiences that I have begun to name and identify the injustices that I see happening to Aboriginal people but that I had previously been conditioned not to mention. I cannot disregard these experiences; to disregard them would mean not recognizing my potential to relearn new ways of seeing the world.

Conclusion

Utilizing narrative inquiry methods within a case study approach, my research questions explore the pedagogical practices of non-Aboriginal secondary school educators, specifically ways in which pedagogical practices create opportunities for students to develop awareness of Indigenous knowledge and Aboriginal perspectives. Through this methodological framework, my intentions have been to deepen my understanding of educators' consideration for, and

infusion of Indigenous knowledge and Aboriginal perspectives in the classroom. In utilizing this framework it is not my intention to make sweeping generalizations, nor do I wish to suggest an ultimate 'truth' through my interpretation of relevant literature and the case at hand. Rather, I seek to inform others through critical reflection that alternative meanings and understandings need to be considered and studied in order to further peoples' understanding of issues related to what it means to teach in a culturally sensitive and empathetic manner.

Chapter Four

Results and Analysis

Introduction

In this chapter I provide information regarding the participants as individuals. I will then identify themes in the data and relate them to current research literature. In addition to themes derived from my research questions, I discuss emergent themes; themes that I did not anticipate finding, but that I feel contribute insights and raise issues related to the original questions. The responses from student and teacher participants have been organized and presented as though both groups are speaking and answering back to each other. This decision was based on a desire to foster a dialogical learning environment.

The Participants

For my study, I utilized Aboriginal learners' accounts of their schooling experiences to inform the pedagogical practices of secondary school teachers. I individually interviewed six Aboriginal students who were enrolled in post-secondary programs at universities or colleges throughout southwestern Ontario. All of the students self-identified as female and First Nations and were in their second year of post-secondary studies in various disciplines. The students shared the experience of pursuing post-secondary education. However, the stories on how they had each arrived at this point were highly individualized. Angelina, Marissa, Lillian and Wah kwa nii attended elementary school on reserve and then transitioned off reserve to complete high school. Kelsey lived on reserve but attended both elementary and secondary school off reserve, while Gwen grew up in an urban environment and attended several elementary and secondary schools. Angelina, Lillian, and Marissa were from communities in northern Ontario while Gwen and Kelsey were originally from communities in southwestern Ontario. Wah kwa nii attended

elementary school in the United States, moving to western Canada in her adolescence before finally settling in southwestern Ontario. All of these women highlighted the fact that a large proportion of their teachers were non-Aboriginal regardless of whether they attended school on or off reserve.

The six teachers who participated in focus group interviews represented secondary schools throughout the school board. Kory, William, Emily, and Eric made up one focus group while Dan and Megan made up the second group. The teachers' professional experience ranged from six to twenty-five years. Eric, William, Kory, Megan, and Dan taught Native Studies courses at their respective schools or had taught the course in the past. Kory and Megan had recently transferred to the Guidance department while Emily was teaching Co-operative education. The Aboriginal population at each of the teachers' schools ranged from three to five students to between 10 and 20 per cent of the entire student population. Surrounded by four First Nation communities, the local school board has gone to great lengths over the last few years to strengthen relationships between local First Nations and area schools. In recent years they have employed an Aboriginal liaison who ensures teachers have access to quality resources and are informed about local community members who are willing and available to visit classrooms as guest speakers. Moreover, the school board has invested a lot of time and money into providing secondary school teachers with professional development opportunities since the Ontario Ministry of Education developed and released the Native Studies curriculum for grades 9-12 in 1999 and 2000.

In interviewing these two participant groups, my intentions were twofold. First I identified how non-Aboriginal teachers (outsiders) had approached the difficult task of incorporating Aboriginal issues and perspectives and culturally appropriate ways into their

pedagogical practices. Then I investigated teachers commitment to a process of unlearning and re-educating themselves in order to educate their students in a culturally appropriate and sensitive manner. Moreover, I gave Aboriginal students the opportunity to share their perspectives on how Aboriginal issues and perspectives were represented throughout their schooling experiences and to what extent these representations affected their own cultural identity growing up. Throughout the focus group interviews with teachers I wove in the student participants' perspectives if I felt a particular students' perspective would further the discussion. This happened most frequently when I asked teachers a question that I had also asked students. Student participants' responses were often incorporated into the teacher participant interviews when teachers were asked to reflect on their colleagues' and their own efforts to incorporate Aboriginal perspectives into their teaching.

Findings

Aboriginal Issues and Perspectives [or lack of Aboriginal Issues and Perspectives] in the Curriculum: The Threat of Generalizations and its Impact on Cultural Identity

The teachers I spoke with noted an increase in acknowledgement and celebration of Aboriginal cultures in recent years but admitted that this acknowledgement has been gradual:

> William: I would say luckily it's something that has increased significantly in the last maybe five and stretch it back to 10 years. You see a lot of it now but certainly when I began like I said 15 years ago there was very little acknowledgement even let alone interaction and celebration of Aboriginal culture. But like I said it is something that is beginning to come much more common than it has in the past.

All of the teachers shared William's view about the recent focus on incorporating Aboriginal cultures and histories into schools, attributing the increase of Aboriginal perspectives into the classroom as a result of the Native Studies program.

The students however, provided unique responses when asked to what extent Aboriginal content and perspectives were incorporated into their courses. All of the students said the representation of Aboriginal content was minimal. Marissa noted how the representation of Aboriginal people in textbooks were often static images depicting Aboriginal people running around in leather and living in teepees Any mention of Aboriginal people was relegated to history or world issue courses and even then was mentioned only briefly:

> Marissa: With our grade ten history all they said was that we fought in the war but really…yeah we did but there was so much more Aboriginal history to that and that's a huge part of Canadian history and they just kind of left that out.

Kelsey expressed a similar response, adding that historical information related to Aboriginal culture and traditions, when integrated into the curriculum was often recounted incorrectly. She shared the following example:

> Kelsey: They would put us all in one big bubble and they would all say we lived in teepees which is incorrect; like Iroquois people, they are people of the longhouse so they live in a longhouse. There are some people that live in teepees, some people that live in igloos, so it was kind of like they put us in a big bubble and said this is where they live and this is the kind of clothes they wore…different tribes and nations have different clothing and have different cultural backgrounds. They did say we were a hunter and gatherer society which is what everyone, like as a big whole we are a hunter and gatherer

> society, but like they didn't know that lacrosse was made by the Haudenosaunee and Iroquois people, it was everyone and again with the housing and even some of the traditions and everything, it was as if everyone was the same and we all practiced the same thing…but there are also a lot of differences too.

The "bubble" Kelsey referred to was also evident in several other students' responses. They told me that generalizations made about Aboriginal people often infiltrated classroom discussions. Comments made by former teachers and classmates' often portrayed Aboriginal people in a negative light. Such comments were often dismissed or ignored.

> Gwen: I remember that when I was in my intro to sociology…I think we were talking about residential school and something and they said, they were like, "they don't go get an education even though its free, what's wrong with them, they would rather just buy alcohol". Things like that. And then my teacher was like, "Oh I remember when I was in grade school I went to a reserve and I saw this Native guy sitting on the side of the road drinking mouthwash" and I was just like, why would you say that?

The perpetuation of such negative and harmful racial stereotypes weighed heavily on Gwen. Being one of the few Aboriginal students in her high school, she experienced feeling of inferiority and was hesitant to speak up in opposition to the offensive comments made about Aboriginal people:

> Gwen: Yeah, people would…say their little comments and stuff, and I would be the only one so I wouldn't want to like argue with everybody cause … I remember this one kid was like…we deserve their land because we conquered it, well and it was ours…going off and everyone was like yeah, yeah, yeah, and I was like can't say anything because

> I'm the only one and I'm not going to argue with everyone. That's happened a lot of times.

Gwen's experience exemplified a moment in her schooling where she felt silenced and inferior because of her position in the classroom as the only Aboriginal person. Furthermore, when her classmates agreed so readily with an arbitrary comment made by one particular student regarding land claims it became evident that a discourse of settlers' land entitlement had been legitimized and perpetuated over time by the dominant culture to appear as "natural" and *the* truth.

For Wah kwa nii, who left high school as an adolescent and then returned to school later in life to receive her high school diploma, the feelings of inadequacy she struggled with only increased as she progressed through her schooling:

> Wah kwa nii: I wasn't learning. And I knew that I was smart and I was told that I was smart but as I grew older I got the opinions somewhere, somehow that I was not smart. I don't know where that came from. It could have come from a grade three teacher at the time…She told my mother…in no uncertain terms that I was a blockhead. And I carried that for years. Like years. I am 48 years old, I am a grandmother of six, and I am now finally coming into my own in the education realm.

A key objective of critical pedagogy is that education should serve to empower those who are culturally marginalized. However, for Gwen and Wah kwa nii, their schooling experiences led them to experience feelings of alienation. They struggled to find a sense of belonging and as a result, how they came to understand their own cultural identity in relationship with the broader Aboriginal community was negatively impacted:

> Gwen: I didn't know how to defend myself because I didn't know what to say cause I didn't grow up on the reserve but it's like people kind of look down…I don't know what I am supposed to say and it bothers me because it is personal because they don't understand.
>
> Wah kwa nii: I never knew who I was. I never knew who I was. I knew that I was Oneida, well, what is that? What is Oneida? What is Haudenosaunee? What does it mean? What does it mean to be an Indian? It was very difficult so what did I try to be? I tried to be white. You want me to be educated but then I didn't match up because I am not smart enough now… Man, it was really, really, rough. I can't candy coat it and I don't want to lie and I don't want to say it was all grandiose great, no it was a hard life.

The teacher participants agreed that negative racial stereotypes as they relate to Aboriginal people are rampant among both students and teaching staff in their schools. Although the teachers said conditions have improved, they recognized that racial stereotypes still exist. Nevertheless, efforts are continually being made to dispel these racial stereotypes through cultural awareness days and professional development opportunities. For two of the teachers I interviewed, their objectives in teaching courses such as Native Studies were to deconstruct many of the negative racial stereotypes that exist regarding Aboriginal people by increasing students' appreciation for local Aboriginal culture:

> Eric: I am at a primarily white school. So basically my focus is on, they are coming in with these stereotypes right, what they hear around the dinner table, oh no taxes, you see something in the media, you don't have to pay taxes, they just want the land back everything so my focus is just to break down those stereotypes right? But I don't start

there, I start with the culture, a little bit of the history… a lot of hands on workshops, then by the end of it, it comes full circle I hope. They leave; they take a different view especially when we get to residential schools they are like really, yeah, okay. The trickledown effect… so for mine that's the whole thing I am trying to do, appreciate the culture, stop the stereotypical talk, you see something in the media, don't believe it right off the bat, it's usually a negative, go back behind the issue, that's all I want my guys to know.

Kory: I am the same… I am not really concerned that they ace a multiple choice test, it's more of can they leave with a different view then they had coming in because the stereotypes are rampant and they need to at least be able to think for themselves…and a lot of them I find once the residential school thing is where it really starts to click. They are pissed off that something could happen like that right up to the 1970s in a country like Canada. If they can leave with at least a willingness to question then that's fine with me.

Teachers also recognized the importance of developing cultural sensitivity among students through the delivery of courses such as Native Studies. However they were concerned the reach of such courses is limited:

William: "If you look at the student population that are actually being affected at all, becoming a little more culturally aware and sensitive of Aboriginal issues [it] is so small related to the overall student population that… I think the reach is the issue… I think the Native Studies courses, the kids that come out of that are very you know culturally enlightened or are aware of the historical wrongs and all of the things that we are going

through there but that the reach is too limited and we need to find a way to work it into other classes".

Kory agreed with William, suggesting the need for Aboriginal history to be incorporated further into grade 10 history, which is a mandatory course for all high school students: "It really needs to be in grade 10 history so that every kid gets it in a significant portion… not just a chapter with questions at the end".

Eric noted the challenge to reach even the students who are taking the Native Studies course:

> Eric: We have one shot at it. One Native Studies course to put that light on and say I am going to question things a little different now, that's it…Because we are working against the media, backgrounds, on all sides, so yeah, we are at the front of the room standing on one foot…waiting for that light to go on and say wait a minute, that's it, we did our jobs.

Marissa felt all teachers, regardless of whether they were teaching a history or world issues course needed to be more educated about Aboriginal history as it is the responsibility of everyone, not just a few:

> Marissa: We are Canadians, we were here before any Europeans came and if the rest of Canada expects us to be part of their country then I think they should be aware of us too… I think it is important for them to be aware because most likely in a lot of classrooms there are at least one Aboriginal student and culture is a very important thing for us.

William's response was similar to Marissa's, emphasizing the fact that the issues facing Aboriginal people today are a result of historical, political, social, and cultural inequities. As

such, it is the responsibility of all teachers to address these issues with students to ensure the past does not repeat itself:

> William: Hopefully teachers are doing it because personal understanding of what's right and what their job should entail, creating a generation of kids who understand what is right and how important it is in a society and how that is contrary to the way things have been done in the past. Hopefully it is that sort of personal attitude that is affecting most teachers, based on the events over the last 20, 15 years, far more so than being mandated by the government and then having our memos from time to time.

Marissa's response as well as the teachers' responses highlighted the need for increasing support and professional development around the incorporation of Aboriginal issues, perspectives and culturally appropriate content into all courses. Although the teachers were grateful for the professional development they had received when the Native Studies program was first introduced, the teachers noted these opportunities had been localized to Native Studies teachers. Despite efforts having been made by some teachers and support staff to infuse Aboriginal perspectives into other subject areas, such as English, Language instruction, and Art, many of the teachers responded that professional development opportunities around Aboriginal perspectives and teaching First Nation students were often limited for teachers teaching courses other than Native Studies.

Whose Story is it? Multiple Stories, Multiple Perspectives

Drawing on the students' narratives I shared with the teachers how disheartening it was for many of the students to read passages in history textbooks that depicted inaccurate portrayals of Aboriginal people. I asked teachers if this was a problem they had encountered in their own teaching:

> Eric: For sure. We struggled with that at the beginning when they, there was no curriculum, there was no textbooks, we were all sitting around the table like, "Oh okay". But we acknowledge that we are not experts and there are so many different cultures, oral stories and yeah we have to pick and choose and we are at the front of the room so we are kind of picking and choosing so we try to keep it you know to our local, if we are tied to a reservation, then pick their stories and stuff, but yeah there is a big topic that we struggle with to get it up off the ground.

The teachers also pointed to the nuances in stories from one reserve to another and even among members of the same reserve. Often presented with variations on the same story, teachers felt they had to 'pick and choose' which story to use in class. Emily shared an instance where there was some disagreement concerning the sharing of the "right" creation story:

> Emily: You know one of the complaints they had in grade 9 when we teach the creation story…[was that] we were not teaching the right creation story you know, with one individual saying it's not the right one, but well okay so give us the right one. So we got the right one but even then somebody, a student from that same community said this isn't right. This isn't what my grandma told me and then it's like you know what do you do? It's the same community, we are getting two or three stories so there is that, and I think

> we have a pretty good relationship where we are at a point where we are saying okay we are all trying here…I think that's an important component is to have the support of the community, you know we are trying our best…but sometimes we have to make a choice between three different stories which one are we teaching and that is kind of a difficult position for some of the teachers and they are not comfortable with that… And it is as teachers, I am just saying that's a struggle we have because you know while you are building these relationships back up that were strained and non-existent some people are not going to agree with the decisions that are being made by the teachers then that is a concern some of the teachers have.

Teachers recognized how, from an Indigenous worldview multiple perspectives or 'tellings' of a story are encouraged to further students' thinking about particular subject areas. All of the teachers mentioned how they encouraged students to share with classmates their own understandings and interpretations of stories told to them by family or community members. Nevertheless, teachers struggled to ensure the stories they shared in their classes were in fact, the stories local communities wanted shared. Fear of not telling the 'right' stories lead teachers to reveal how issues of trust between local Aboriginal community members and publicly funded school districts remain an area of concern. Although the teachers felt relationships among local First Nation communities and schools were improving, the history and legacy of residential school still impacts relations between parents, community members, and teachers.

Stories of Support: Teachers Working with and for Aboriginal Students

Although students shared stories from their schooling experiences where the presence of Aboriginal histories, cultures, and perspectives was absent from course content, the students also revealed memories of teachers who worked tirelessly to incorporate Aboriginal perspectives into their pedagogical practice in meaningful ways. Kelsey shared her experiences taking an Aboriginal based art class. This course, lead by a non-Aboriginal teacher was new to the school the year Kelsey was enrolled. The course was offered in an attempt to increase engagement among the Aboriginal students who attended the school. In particular Kelsey spoke about the dedicated teacher who facilitated the course and the teacher's commitment to incorporating local Iroquois and Haudenosaunee knowledge and experiential based learning opportunities:

> Kelsey: She asked a lot of us for a lot of help because she didn't know…She would always ask and we would always help… She did a really good job…she did ask us if she didn't know; she asked us if she was doing it right, so she was interested in trying to help us.

For others, the efforts teachers invested into creating and maintaining respectful relationships with Aboriginal students was appreciated. Students spoke of regular instances where teachers went out of their way to assist students; wanting them to succeed. Lillian spoke fondly about her grade eight teacher who always helped her with her homework. As Lillian recalled,

> Lillian: She was understanding. She actually cared…I don't know if it was just me or if it was other students as well but she was always like, I want you to do really good on this homework, so it was really like she wanted us to succeed.

Angelina struggled in school as a result of being so far from her family and friends. Transitioning to academic courses from applied courses was also difficult, but Angelina recalled the support and encouragement she received from teachers and counselors in her school:

> Angelina: I did really poorly because now I was in the academic level, I went from applied and I jumped, and I went to this different school that was more intense and I struggled a lot and I had low grades and I thought I was really dumb I guess, but I had a lot of support from my teachers…I was also seeing the high school counselor there and… she helped me a lot too. She would pull me from class to just talk out of nowhere and it was nice because I really needed that.

Teachers also emphasized how dedicated school staff members were to increasing the acknowledgement of local Aboriginal culture and history. For Dan, his school's commitment to increasing awareness of local Aboriginal culture among staff and students was exemplified through the hard work of those who belonged to the *Future Elders* program. This program, established in 2008 was aimed at mentoring and supporting First Nation students. As Dan described, the original goal of this program was for students to be able to share their culture with their peers, teachers, and local community:

> Dan: [The program was originally] for kids who cared about First Nations culture and wanted to share it with more people and get involved with different things to make a positive difference in the school and community. That's what it came from five years ago.

In the past, students have been involved in various fundraising campaigns to raise money for different organizations within the local community. They have also hosted memorial

addresses in honour of local Aboriginal heroes and to acknowledge local residential school survivors. They also run a biannual powwow and invite different guest speakers to the school to speak on such topics as life after school. As faculty advisor, Dan admitted that at least half of the work he does at school is dedicated to extracurricular programs such as the *Future Elders.* For Dan, it was his personal discomfort with the current achievement gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students that lead him to addressing this issue of equity:

> Dan: We were talking about graduation rates for First Nations students … saying there that the approximate graduation rates for kids coming into grade nine was about, depending on the year was about 25-33 per cent and so that basically means two to three or three to four kids who come here in grade nine weren't leaving with a grade 12 diploma. It just struck me that two kids, and the idea that my two kids going into grade nine and one of them isn't going to pass, I would be furious and I would want them, and if this was a situation for all the kids in our province the government should be, their heads should be exploding. So that was what really gave me a kick in the pants to say we got to find some better way to hook these kids… That's really where the motivation started, trying to hook more of the kids and trying to get them out the door with their grade 12 and along the way I realized there is a lot of rich history and culture, traditions, stuff like that that is valuable to share with as many people as we can. I bought into the idea that the kids had about sharing culture with as many people as we can.

Dan's response exemplified what it means for teachers to engage in a process of naming and problem posing. His realization that many Aboriginal students were not graduating with their grade twelve diploma caused him to question the current educational system and how it serves the needs of Aboriginal students. He realized that the current learning environment at his school

did not adequately meet Aboriginal students' needs, and as a result worked hard to determine what students required in order to achieve a positive educational outcome. Through continuous dialogue with fellow teachers, local community members, students' and administrators, and by not settling for just 'good enough' he quickly came to understand what needed to be acknowledged in the classroom: students' own history, their own culture. Dan learned alongside his students, and was honest with them that he was hardly the expert but was willing to learn and seek out appropriate resources in order to support their own learning.

"Is that right?" Students as the Unofficial Expert

Many of the students expressed feelings of frustration at the lack of knowledge and understanding their peers and teachers had about different Aboriginal issues. Many of them found it challenging to be the assumed 'expert' on all things related to Aboriginal people:

> Kelsey: A lot of times if things were brought up about Aboriginal people or First Nations, people would look at me like I had the answer and they would be like, "Is that right?" or they would be looking at me to see if I would be reacting in a certain way. Teachers didn't know, or they would be kind of looking at me for the answers or making sure they weren't offending me in anyway.

For Angelina, she was often uncomfortable being asked questions about Aboriginal communities, cultures, and traditions because she was concerned her responses would be oversimplified:

> Angelina: Sometimes I don't like saying stuff because I know… every community is different and when I speak about [one] it doesn't mean that it's the same for another

community, or another person…sometimes I don't like talking or saying something just because I don't want to over generalize because I see it happen a lot.

Marissa shared her experiences informing her peers both informally and formally about the issues currently facing Aboriginal people and the response of shock she often received in return. However when asked if she felt the sense of shock drove them to learn more, her response was one of doubt:

> Marissa: Um, I don't really think so… because when I do tell them it's not like I tell them the whole story, I tell them a little bit so they don't realize the magnitude of the situation, the problem…they just think it is a little thing but I don't think they realize it's a big problem, its everywhere, it's all over Canada and the United States… it's not like I have the time to have an hour conversation to tell them everything that has happened.

Marissa's response demonstrated people's lack of understanding and realization of the magnitude of the challenges facing Aboriginal people both within a historical context as well as within the current social and political contexts. When asked why their peers and teachers are ill-informed, three of the students raised concerns over the influence of media in perpetuating negative images of Aboriginal people.

> Kelsey: It makes me frustrated why people don't want to learn about it because there are different Aboriginal issues and now with the land treaties and everything going on right now, people protesting, things like that, people get very angry at us, they think you know, like even now people think a lot of First Nations are all drunks or they are all drug addicts or they all own smoke shops and they are all thieves or whatever, just from one experience and how the media portrays everyone… Like not everyone is like that but I

am just saying there is a lot of different stereotypes like that and a lot of them could be broken if you knew the history or kind of knew what was going on. If you were just aware of the issues that were going on today… people don't understand that.

Wah kwa nii contributed teachers' reluctance to incorporating Aboriginal content into their teaching to the fact that many teachers are uneducated themselves; a product of a curriculum that did not teach them anything about Aboriginal history:

Wah kwa nii: I think they were uneducated themselves. I think their curriculum didn't teach them anything so why should they pass anything on? They would have to go home and study just to give that lesson and then could they understand?

Throughout the interview teachers acknowledged that various levels of commitment existed among staff to incorporate Aboriginal perspectives into their teaching. This was often due to resistance from teachers to teach something they themselves had never been taught:

Megan: The teachers definitely care but it's a comfort level on their part. They may not be comfortable bringing it into the classroom because they themselves are not sure how to approach it or how to or don't have enough, feel they don't have enough knowledge on it themselves to bring it into the classrooms so they rather than tackle it just avoid it. Elsa agreed:

Emily : I think they just don't know…they weren't taught it so how would you get that knowledge unless they are taught it and unless you are teaching the Native studies or the history, when have the majority of the teachers' necessarily heard the stories?...So I do kind of agree with that and that's where I really think we have to educate the teachers.

> Every single one of them…so that they have the knowledge…so that they want to take on the issue.

It was evident in the responses from students and educators that both groups were cognizant of the asymmetrical relations of power that had historically and presently shaped and influenced their own experiences of schooling. Both groups made reference to the fact that the "banking concept" of education whereby students are passive recipients to knowledge still exists. Nevertheless, through the teachers' responses it became evident that for them, this approach toward education was gradually changing to a problem-posing approach. All the teachers emphasized the need for continual opportunities where issues such as stereotyping, culture, and the influence of media can be critically discussed:

> Kory: I think just having the dialogue gets both teachers and students kind of on board…teachers are a reflection of society. There are some fairly ignorant teachers, just like there are ignorant people in society. The fact that you are forcing people to really talk about it and acknowledge that it is really exists is a good starting point.

Emily felt it was important for students to get outside of their comfort zone and have opportunities to explore and experience life beyond classroom walls:

> Emily: How can we expect them to become more culturally aware when they haven't gotten outside? So even if it's not a First Nations community we are taking them to so they are aware of that, at least where they get outside that comfort zone… Just more experiences for the kids to immerse into something different than what they are used to.

Eric took a different approach with his response, emphasizing the need for a complete overhaul on how teachers think and approach education. When asked what he would like see change within his current schooling environment he responded with this:

> Eric: I think we need to rethink this whole education thing and the way we approach it. I am pretty big on layered curriculum right now and it is basically the kids get to pick their own assignments, they are in control, they pick their grades, A, B, C, whatever they want. They pick their differentiated instruction, multiple intelligences, it's all taken care of, it's tied right to the report card and I think that we have to step back at some point in time and give the kids more control to do their stuff and not always us trying to do every little DI activity and run it, no give it right back to them. So yeah, I want to change the whole way we do it. Technology has come on and we have to get on board with that, so I think the whole education thing needs to be rethought.

Eric's response was unique as he was the only teacher within the group who suggested a complete revamping of the education system. His suggestions, on using a layered curriculum approach as well as giving students more autonomy over their studies demonstrated how critically reflective he had become toward his pedagogical practice.

Stories of Optimism: What Students and Teachers Envision for the Future

During my interviews with students and teachers, I asked both groups, the following question: What would you like to see change, happen, or stay the same in schools concerning Aboriginal content and Aboriginal perspectives? Kelsey emphasized how important it is for schools to invest time and effort into addressing and deconstructing the negative stereotypes that exist around Aboriginal people:

> Kelsey: Just getting everyone knowledgeable about the different stereotypes and how they are wrong… there are stereotypes about different things and we are dead set on getting rid of those stereotypes about homosexuals, even about African Americans. Those are always bashed, but not our stereotypes. A lot of people are taught, even in American schools about slavery, things like that, whereas First Nations people of Canada, we were the first people here and…they don't know anything about us.

For Wah kwa nii it was simply wanting teachers to make the effort to get to know their students:

> Wah kwa nii: I'd like to see the teachers take those little brown children, just take them under their wing. They are the teacher. They know when others, a little boy or a little girl doesn't really understand. Then take time, take two minutes. You don't understand what two minutes can do in the life of a child. You know? Everything because that's how we are born, that's how we thrive is through caring and sharing. You know what's wrong with like taking the little guy outside and saying what's going on? You may not get an answer but as long as you show that you care is huge. Actions, actions, actions, actions speak so much louder than words. And just that, that feel in your eyes because children are so smart. They'll get it and you will watch that little child grow you know, like a

beautiful flower. Give them that opportunity; even just give them two minutes of your heart. That's all. That's what I would like to see more of.

For Emily, it was important for students to grow accustom to seeing Aboriginal content represented and discussed across subject areas:

> Emily: I see a school where something is taught in a class that's First Nations and the kids are not going, "we have to learn this again"? That is what I would like to see. Where they see it as being absolutely not remarkable that something First Nations in any class at the school instead of saying "hmmph". That's what I would love to see. How do we get there? I think it's by just putting that stuff in there. They become aware of it, they see it, they see it, they see it, they see it so when they see it that last time it doesn't even occur to them that it is anything in their minds unusual.

Evident in the responses received from both students and teachers was the emphasis placed on creating a classroom environment where students and teachers can work collaboratively in their understanding and learning of Aboriginal history and culture. Just as the students indicated that they preferred not to be the assumed expert on all Aboriginal issues and perspectives, teachers also openly admitted that they are not the experts simply because they are standing at the front of the room. In order to increase both groups' knowledge, sensitivity to, and comfort in discussing Aboriginal issues, it is integral for both groups to work with each other toward building relationships of mutual respect and reciprocity.

Emergent Themes

"I Want to Make Change Happen": Stories of Resilience and Hope

Regardless of the hardships and challenges the students I interviewed had to face throughout their schooling experiences, an underlying theme throughout my conversations with these students was one of determination. It quickly became evident in speaking with these women that finding success in their current educational pursuits was a result of their individual strength and resolve. They were all cognizant of the negative racial stereotypes that exist regarding Aboriginal people and how these portrayals often contribute to the positioning of Aboriginal people as substandard within the larger Canadian context. Rather than allow these racial stereotypes to discourage them on their educational journeys, they chose to write themselves a new story, one that highlighted their growth as individuals, their resilience and commitment to living in a good way. For Kelsey and Marissa, the absence of Aboriginal culture and history throughout their schooling ignited a desire within themselves to learn more about their culture and what it meant to be Aboriginal:

> Kelsey: I know I am First Nations but I want to know what that means, I want to know that this is what we do during this time and this is how we go about it…I want to know why and be able to be knowledgeable in my heritage as First Nations and know what I am, who I am, what that mean...I want to be able to pass that down and keep the knowledge going cause that is the only way we can keep our culture alive is by doing that, is by knowing.
>
> Marissa: I think before grade 11… I didn't really know anything… I didn't really think being Aboriginal meant a big deal to me…I was just another person… but once I started learning about it, I learned about all the inequalities and everything and it upset me…so I

started educating myself and now…I am more of a proud Aboriginal person. I am trying…I want to make change happen.

Angelina‘s story of resistance unfolded differently than the two women’s stories above. Having attended elementary school in a remote First Nations community, Angelina made the decision to attend high school off reserve. Over the next few years she attended high school in two different locations, both of which required her to live with boarding families. It wasn’t until she transferred boarding homes and began attending school in a new city that she began to seriously reflect on the experience of living away from her family in order to receive an education:

> Angelina: Being away from home I began to wonder, why am I, why do I have to go through this? Why do I have to feel homesick? Why didn’t my parents go to school, why aren’t they being educated like me? Why didn’t they get the chance to do that and then it clicked and it started to come to me, oh residential school.

The legacy of residential school has impacted and infiltrated into the educational experiences of Aboriginal students both with regards to what they learned (and did not learn) about Aboriginal history and the sacrifices students had to make in order to obtain an education.

"Why in the World is a White Person Teaching this Class?" Navigating the Tensions of being non-Aboriginal Teaching a Native Studies Course

In speaking with the teachers I asked them if being non-Aboriginal and teaching Native studies had lead them to reflect on their whiteness and if so, how had their reflections influenced their pedagogical practice. All of the teachers acknowledged that, for the most part being non-Aboriginal has not been an issue with regards to the relationships they have with Aboriginal students both in and outside the classroom nor does it play a factor when teaching courses such Native Studies. Eric felt a teacher's ability to connect with students on an individual level and gain their trust was more influential: "At the end of the day it comes down to who's in front of the kids …if the kids will respond to your teaching, it doesn't matter".

Emily agreed with Eric's comment; however she admitted in the past, issues of trust had surfaced between teachers and parents of Aboriginal students. This for her was something she still struggled with:

> Emily: I am a teacher with pretty high expectations to begin with and my expectations are the same for every student but I have had a number of parents that don't particularly enjoy that. First Nations and non First Nations. It's a difference in how they respond. Non First Nations parents you are too hard…and First Nations parents it is immediately you are racist and that is what I find very difficult. I teach co-op and they are not handing things in so phoning the parents and their not handing things in and well it's because you are racist. Well…I'm sorry, it doesn't matter, you need to be handing things in but that I find is the biggest difference that sometimes that is the first thing that is said. It's a card that gets pulled and I understand why it gets pulled, that trust isn't there in the

community still so I understand that but it is something that you work through quite often with parents.

Megan also felt at times challenged teaching Natives Studies and being non-Aboriginal:

> Megan: You are definitely challenged a little bit… but I always go at it from a point of I don't know everything, I am obviously not Native and…anyone that can bring more to the class for sure bring it and if we don't know what we are talking about we will look it up and figure it out. That's the best we can do. But for sure there should be a point someday where I am not teaching Native Studies anymore and it's all First Nations people teaching Native Studies but we are not there yet.

For William he felt it helped when he was honest with students about his developing knowledge of Aboriginal history and culture:

> William: I think teachers need to say, we are learning at the same time as you. Kids need to understand that a bit. Especially in a course that you are not entirely comfortable with, content that you are not all familiar with. But I found that the kids have been you know, quite respectful and work with me.

William did acknowledge however that on one occasion there had been a situation where he felt as though a wall had been put up between him and a student:

> William: It was the first year that I taught Native Studies so sometimes you do get that issue. I think… it is a trust issue. If it is stated that there are some things you could explain to me… please feel free to offer it…that is what you hope and some kids have done that, a lot of kids have done that actually but sometimes you just get the wall and that's unfortunate and we are very sensitive to it, feel bad about it because that's not what

you want, or that sort of result or experience in teaching but it has happened. And whether or not that was rooted in culture, it sure felt like it to me because I think it was getting into storytelling and mythology where this kid basically stopped really participating and interacting in class and things like that. I actually personally did chalk it up to cultural differences and a trust issue but again that was one and I have taught more than a hundred First Nations kids in Native Studies and it's only been one issue, but it is something that sticks with you for sure.

Conclusion

The findings presented above indicate that non-Aboriginal secondary school educators are working to incorporate Indigenous knowledge and Aboriginal perspectives into their pedagogical practice more now than in the recent past. With the introduction of the Native Studies program by the Ontario Ministry of Education, both students and teachers have had the opportunity to deepen their knowledge and understanding concerning issues involving Aboriginal people, historically and in contemporary society. Moreover, efforts are being made to dispel racial stereotypes concerning Aboriginal people as individuals grow increasingly more educated on the social, political, and economical challenges facing Aboriginal people through recent initiatives to build relationships between schools and local First Nation communities. Nevertheless, as the findings above emphasize, far more investment still needs to be made to ensure Indigenous knowledge and its pedagogies, both in a local and in a broader context are identified as a valuable knowledge system.

Student participants on the other hand, felt Indigenous knowledge and Aboriginal perspectives were neither adequately nor appropriately infused into course content. When issues

concerning Aboriginal people were raised, information was often inaccurately accounted and in some instances, teachers' would make explicit their own personal biases against Aboriginal people.

> Lillian: In my world history class there was a little blurb in the textbook [that] talked about residential schools, like a paragraph and the teacher said that they were there to educate the students, but like that is a misunderstanding because that's not what they were there for.

Very rarely did students' describe the incorporation of Aboriginal issues, perspectives, and culturally appropriate content across subject areas other than history and social studies. Limiting the incorporation of Aboriginal perspectives to courses such as history or Native studies made both student and teacher participants concerned with the overall reach and impact these courses can have.

Teacher participants were forthright in admitting that they themselves were still working through the tensions of teaching a course such as Native Studies where the subject matter can often generate feelings of misunderstanding between students in the classroom as well as lead to a breakdown of trust between students and teachers. Moreover, all of the student participants made reference to the challenges they experienced navigating between what many of them described as 'two worlds': the pursuit of educational achievement in a dominant Eurocentric educational system while working to strengthen their knowledge and understanding of their traditional culture.

Chapter Five

Discussion

Between Two Worlds: Navigating the Tensions as Border Workers

Despite not having Aboriginal traditions, history, worldviews, values, and beliefs reflected and validated throughout their schooling experiences, each of the student participants in this study, from a western educational perspective, found educational achievement. Yet, from an Aboriginal worldview, these women are just beginning their learning journeys. It became evident in my conversations with each of the women that despite having had 'success' in school, their understanding of achievement was not measured by their ability to meet curriculum expectations or through obtaining a high school diploma. Rather, their self-worth came through acknowledgement and acceptance of their gifts, strengths, capabilities, and interests. Recognizing learning as 'a life-long responsibility' (Battiste, 2002, p. 14) the student participants' acknowledged how their learning extended beyond the classroom walls. Regardless of the implicit and explicit racial stereotypes and remarks aimed at them or Aboriginal people within a broader context, they persisted forward on their learning journeys, finding support through their family, peers, and for some, a return to traditional teachings.

Reflecting on the students' stories, there is evidence that they engaged in a number of practices that are usually associated with critical pedagogy. This was exemplified through their engagement in constructive dialogue and their willingness to name, question, and tease out the inherent tensions that exist between social class and knowledge. Naming and problematizing the current schooling environment also demonstrates the student participants' resiliency as border workers. All the student participants have overcome incredible adversity throughout their

schooling. Despite successfully maneuvering through a predominantly Eurocentric schooling experience, one that lends itself to many contradictions in relation to Aboriginal worldviews, they maintained a sense of pride in their culture. Each of the students' identified instances in their schooling when Aboriginal perspectives were misrepresented or ignored. They acknowledged how this affected their self-worth and cultural understanding. Whether it was experiencing feelings of alienation at the result of being separated from friends and family or experiencing confusion surrounding the social norms they were expected to follow and conform to in their schooling, all of the students experienced moments where, from a cultural context, they struggled with oppression. Such struggle demonstrates the pervasiveness of acculturation happening within schools and the damaging effects hegemonic practices can have on Aboriginal learners. The responses from student participants highlighted how schools continue to sustain, legitimize, and reproduce dominant class interests, in this case, Eurocentric knowledge which inadvertently marginalizes and excludes Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing from school contexts.

Working *Together* Toward Transformation and Change

Although efforts have been made to integrate Aboriginal ways of learning and knowing into the western educational model, I am reminded of Ireland's (2009) words when she says, "despite all the work that has been done to make schools a more welcoming place for the Aboriginal learner, they are still not Aboriginal places of learning" (p. 14). It is not my intention to criticize the efforts of the teachers involved in this study who have worked tirelessly to provide culturally-based student services and counseling. Nor do I wish to trivialize the professional development opportunities administrators have provided in order to strengthen their staff's cultural understanding of Aboriginal students. These efforts are the 'hook' that invites

students to connect with and embrace who they are. Moreover, professional development lends itself to many 'a-ha' moments among teachers and administrators, moments that further one's reflexivity as an educator. Yet these opportunities for reflexivity often happen in isolation from one another, and as a result, their impact and reach are limited.

In order to achieve transformation in Aboriginal education, Aboriginal knowledge and pedagogy needs to be invited into Western places of learning. This requires a shift away from addressing the 'problem' of Aboriginal education through curricula and pedagogy that is couched within western worldviews, values, and knowledge toward a validation of both knowledge systems as unique and valuable in what each of them offer. As Ireland (2009) remarks, "If classrooms are to become meaningful places of learning for *all* children, then they need to become places where history *matters*—everyone's history (p. 40). This transformation that Ireland describes can only happen if there is a shift in the attitudes and understandings of educators.

I inferred from the responses I received from teachers involved in my study that each of them is on their own journey of 'unlearning'. In reflecting on their responses as well as my own journey of unlearning throughout this study I was reminded of Bishop's (2002) words: "when you begin to teach something you find out what you do not know" (p. 109). The teachers I spoke with were honest in admitting their doubt and uncertainties about not knowing more about Aboriginal people and thus struggling to respectfully build new bridges of understanding between themselves and their students. So often teachers with the best of intentions believe they are creating culturally responsive learning opportunities within their classrooms or broader school environments when unfortunately these efforts teach Aboriginal history and culture in a superficial ways or as part of what Sillian and Leija (2006) refer to as a "Pan-Indian curriculum"

(p. 3). Such an approach to education recognizes cultural difference at the level of dance, food and regalia but does little to examine the underlying issues of oppression and racism. As a result, students leave school ill-prepared to make informed decisions about issues involving and impacting Aboriginal people.

Yet the question remains: How do educators move forward in their own understanding of Eurocentrism, both historically and in its current context? Britzman (1998) suggests the exploration of "difficult knowledge" (p. 117) which requires individuals to not only confront the difficulties of learning from another's encounter with victimization but to also examine the internal conflicts one experiences as a result of such learning. This may include feelings of denial, guilt, and defensiveness. Barker (2010) draws a similar conclusion while referencing Regan's (2010) work around "unsettling the settler within." Barker remarks how individuals must move beyond their comfort zones and be willing to ask the question 'What do we do?' from what he describes as a "profoundly uncomfortable place" (p. 323). This requires one to engage deeply into examining the causes and effects of colonialization and recognizing how each and every one of us are responsible for finding a solution. It is important to separate guilt from responsibility. As Bishop (2002) differentiates, "guilt means taking on all the weight of history as an individual; responsibility means accepting your share of the challenge of changing the situation" (p. 115). To undergo a process of unlearning, educators must be willing to write, just as the student participants in this study have done, a new story, one based on truth, understanding, and mutual reciprocity and responsibility in educating our future generations.

Limitations of the Research

The first limitation of this study is that only students who identified as female and First Nations responded and consented to participation in the interview portion of this study. Although my intentions were to gain a rich understanding of Aboriginal students' schooling experiences from the perspectives of both male and female post-secondary students representative of diverse cultural groups, the limited responses I received made it difficult to achieve this. Nevertheless I feel the student participants who were involved in this study provided a diverse representation of the lived experiences of Aboriginal students in today's educational system.

One could argue another limitation to this study is only stories of students who found educational success within the current educational system were shared. As a result, the greater, systemic issues of racism, poverty, violence, and drug and alcohol abuse that continues to inhibit students' from completing school are not as explicitly addressed. The question then becomes, how does this study show an accurate portrayal of what school is really like for Aboriginal learners?

From the onset of this study it was my intention to highlight the success stories of Aboriginal youth. I recognize that not all Aboriginal learners have the same opportunities and support systems as described by the student participants involved in this study. However for far too long emphasis has been placed on pathologizing Aboriginal learners. Relying on critical pedagogy and its commitment to empowerment and emancipation, I felt the time was most appropriate to make a contribution to educational research that demonstrated the resolve and strength of Aboriginal learners; one that validates their experiences of schooling as *they* experienced it.

Finally, the teachers participating in the two focus group interviews were all non-Aboriginal. One may question why I did not invite members of the Aboriginal community to participate in the focus group interviews and share their perspectives. Although I did consider such an inclusion, as mentioned in chapter one, non-Aboriginal teachers represent the vast majority of public school teachers and my research questions are focused on exploring how non-Aboriginal teachers facilitate and strengthen students understanding and knowledge about Aboriginal culture and Aboriginal perspectives. Nevertheless I felt it was important to incorporate Aboriginal voices into the study, thus I often wove Aboriginal students' responses into the focus groups' discussion.

Chapter Six

Implications for Research and Practice

Decolonizing Our Schools and Ourselves

Within the current educational context, Aboriginal people, history, and culture are often seen as sources of enrichment. It is important for educators to recognize the "need for meaningful Aboriginal content and perspectives that addresses the ways in which colonization and racism shape the lives of Aboriginal people in Canada" (St. Denis, 2011, p. 324). However, in order to make these meaningful connections within the classroom, non-Aboriginal teachers need to have access to professional development opportunities that enable them to further their own understanding of how colonization and racism continues to affect the lives of Aboriginal people. Drawing on the work of Harris (1990) and Hooley (2002; 2007) it is important for policymakers, administrators, and educators to engage in a process of "two-way learning."

> Groups of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people come together to resolve serious issues of mutual concern and to find new ways of proceeding. Two-way inquiry learning seeks not merely to raise awareness and appreciation, but to construct new ideas and practices that new solutions demand to be found. Accordingly, the culture of each participating group is dynamic, altering as the social conditions alter and as people bring new understandings to bear. Each group not only respects the other for what has gone before, but enters into a compact to create a new pathway forward. (Hooley, 2007, p. 4)

Teacher training programs and professional development initiatives are an example of where this two-way learning process can develop between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Such initiatives would invite all educational stakeholders to engage in their own process

of unlearning where they begin to critically examine their personal position of power and privilege as well as one's conscious or unconscious acts that perpetuate these aspects of society. On-going opportunities to participate in professional development encourages both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal education partners to work in collaboration with one another, utilizing these opportunities as the springboard for deeper analysis and understanding of the place of Aboriginal people.

In an effort to move toward healing and reconciliation as well as build new relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal individuals and communities, a process of decolonization needs to occur. According to Smith (1999) "decolonization, once viewed as the formal process of handing over the instruments of government, is now recognized as a long-term process involving the bureaucratic, cultural, linguistic and psychological divesting of colonial power" (p. 98). For educational stakeholders, this means having a more critical understanding of Eurocentric worldviews and working to expose the underlying assumptions, motivations, and principles that are legitimated and maintained through current infrastructures and policies, including the current educational system. Dion, Johnson, and Rice (2010) describe this further:

> In schools undertaking decolonization, students would know the name of the nation on whose traditional territory their school is built, and they would know the names and location of reserves located in close proximity to their school community. Students would develop an understanding of the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, learning that Aboriginal people did not simply or in reality disappear after Canada was explored and settled by waves of immigrants. All students would benefit from access of knowledge and understanding of a complex and difficult history that

> informs the present. And, importantly, Aboriginal students would have the possibility of understanding the context of their lives. (p. 13)

A decolonization of education would invite school communities to reframe the ways in which Indigenous knowledge and Aboriginal perspectives are represented and discussed. Oppressive practices that position Eurocentric knowledge systems as superior would be replaced with progressive measures that work toward transformation and change by naturalizing Indigenous knowledge into the current educational system.

It is important for all teachers, not just those who are teaching a course referencing Aboriginal issues and perspectives to engage in a process of decolonization. Raised throughout the interviews with both students and teachers was concern over the limited reach and decreasing occurrence of professional development opportunities related to Aboriginal education. Knowledge surrounding Aboriginal culture, issues, and perspectives needs to be made explicit and available to all teachers. The promotion of such cultural awareness and competency is most easily facilitated through preservice education programs, ongoing professional development opportunities, and the utilization and knowledge of Aboriginal community members. Regan (2010) highlights that the creation of a decolonizing, transformative space requires non-Indigenous people to "unsettle ourselves to name and then transform the settler—the colonizer who lurks within—not just in words but in our actions…to understand how colonial forms of denial, guilt, and empathy act as barriers to transformative socio-political change" (p. 11). Necessary is an examination of how educators learn about and *learn from* historical injustices. As Regan remarks "…settlers cannot just theorize about decolonizing and liberatory struggle: we must experience it, beginning with ourselves as individuals, and then as morally and ethically responsible socio-political actors in Canadian society" (pp.23-24).

Although the Ontario Ministry of Education has invested efforts into curriculum development and policies that acknowledges Aboriginal cultural knowledge, these efforts, as discussed in previous chapters do little to build bridges between academic learning, students' lived experiences and engagement with local Aboriginal communities. It is important for school districts and schools to develop curriculum resources and support networks that utilize the strengths, teachings, knowledge, languages and values of local Aboriginal communities. Similarly, schools need to acknowledge and address the complexity of incorporating cultural traditions into the current schooling context to prevent the misappropriation of local cultural protocols. Infusing local Aboriginal values and knowledge into the curriculum in an ethical, responsive manner is not only integral to improving the schooling experiences of Aboriginal students, it additionally enables non-Aboriginal students to deepen their understanding of local Aboriginal culture so they too can begin to deconstruct many of the racial stereotypes that pervade both within school contexts and within contemporary society.

It is also imperative for researchers and teacher practitioners to explore the cultures of schools; in particular the resistances to integrating Aboriginal cultural knowledge and worldviews into the current schooling context and how these resistances influence and at times, constrain Aboriginal students' cultural identities. Ongoing efforts need to be made by school districts to ensure education resource persons such as Aboriginal liaison workers are provided, sustained, and made accessible to Aboriginal students.

Finally, it is important for Aboriginal students to have opportunities to become informed and involved in the decision-making processes as it relates to the integration of Aboriginal cultural knowledge into the broader school context. They too are stakeholders in the current context of schooling and have practical contributions to make in discussions concerning

curriculum development and implementation, and changes to existing school structures such as timetabling and course scheduling. This may include inviting student representatives to be active members on a school district's Aboriginal advisory committee, providing opportunities for students to organize and/or attend student-led conferences within and outside of their school districts, as well as offering supports for students to establish their own student-led organizations. The establishment of these organizations would work to build trust and partnerships among students and staff, begin to address the pervasiveness of racial stereotypes, and would promote a community of learning where students share new knowledge and work in collaboration with their peers to facilitate activist work.

Conclusion

This is Not the End, But Only the Beginning

"If one comes to understand and appreciate the power of a particular knowledge, then one must be ready to share and teach it respectfully and responsibly to others in order for this knowledge, and its power, to continue" (Archibald, 2008, p. 3). At the beginning of this thesis I admitted how little I knew about Aboriginal cultural knowledge. As a classroom teacher I did not have the pedagogical content knowledge nor the confidence required to respectfully and responsibly make meaningful connections to curriculum. Through pursuing this study, questions such as, "Who am I to be teaching Aboriginal culture to Aboriginal students?" and, "How can I meaningfully integrate Aboriginal cultural knowledge and perspectives into my teaching?" fueled this research journey. Regardless of how difficult and uncomfortable it was for me to examine my own beliefs and perceptions surrounding the incorporation of Aboriginal cultural

knowledge and perspectives into my pedagogical practices, engaging in such a process was necessary if I was to commit to pursuing this research study in an ethical and respectful manner.

Throughout this thesis I have highlighted, questioned, and reflected on how teachers' have integrated Aboriginal knowledge and perspectives into the teaching of the Ontario high school curriculum. The voices of Aboriginal post-secondary students throughout this thesis have furthered my inquiry and provided insight into how all educational stakeholders—school administrators, the government, educational researchers, teacher educators, teachers, students and community members can contribute to enhancing and supporting classroom learning for Aboriginal students. I am not alone on my quest to answering the questions mentioned above. The teachers I spoke with throughout this process of unlearning confessed that they too struggle with their understandings of, and approaches to, integrating Aboriginal cultural knowledge and perspectives into the school curriculum. Revealed by teachers were the many challenges of infusing Aboriginal content and cultural knowledge. These challenges included teachers' lack of knowledge and understanding of not only Aboriginal history and cultural knowledge but also the systemic issues related to the legacy of residential school, racism, and poverty. Lack of resources, time restraints, the perpetuation of negative racial stereotypes toward Aboriginal people, and incompatibility between current school structures and Aboriginal cultural values and practices were also identified as barriers for students to achieve educational attainment.

There were also successes shared by both students and teachers; 'good news' stories where it was evident how dedicated school staff and students were to informing others of the injustices faced by Aboriginal people and working to avoid any further perpetuation of inequality, cultural misappropriation, and racism. The voices of the students and teachers interviewed suggest that transformational approaches toward the integration of Aboriginal

cultural knowledge and perspectives have begun and although at times an onerous task—such transformation is not insurmountable if all educational stakeholders, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, work *together* toward transformation and change.

In listening to the stories of others I have been reminded of how storytelling can positively contribute to teachers' professional and personal reflexivity. Stories have an ability to provide comfort, to heal. They are also cyclical, continuous, and never-ending because as one draws to a close, another is beginning. It is my hope that the stories of bravery and resiliency shared by both teachers and students in this thesis inspire others to begin writing a new story, one based on respect, reciprocity, and thoughtful action.

References

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. (2010, September 15). Aboriginal peoples and communities. Retrieved from http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100013785/1304467449155

Agbo, S. (2001). Enhancing success in American Indian students: Participatory research at Akwasasne as part of the development of a culturally relevant curriculum. *Journal of American Indian Education, 40*(1), 31-56.

Alaska Native Knowledge Network. (1998). *Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools.* Retrieved from Alaska Native Knowledge Network website: http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/publications/culturalstandards.pdf

Alvesson, M., & Billing, Y. D. (2009). *Understanding gender and organizations.* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Anyon, J. (1999). *Theory and educational research: Toward critical social explanation.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Apple, M. W. (1979). *Ideology and curriculum*. London, UK: Routledge.

Archibald, J. (2008). *Indigenous storywork: Educating the heart, mind, body, and spirit.* Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Atleo, M. R., & Fitznor, L. (2010). Aboriginal educators discuss recognizing, reclaiming, and revitalizing their multi-competencies in heritage/English-language use. *Canadian Journal of Native Education 32*, 13-34.

Barker, A. (2010). From adversaries to allies: Forging respectful alliances between Indigenous and settler peoples. In Davis, L (Ed.), *Re/Envisioning Indigenous-non-Indigenous Relationships.* (316- 333). Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

Banks, J., & McGee Banks, C. A. (Eds.). (2010). *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives.* (7th ed.). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Barman, J. Hébert, Y., & McCaskill, D. (1986). *Indian education in Canada: Volume 1: The legacy.* Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Battiste, M. (1998). Enabling the autumn seed: Toward a decolonized approach to Aboriginal knowledge, language, and education. *Canadian Journal of Native Education, 22*(1), 16-27.

Battiste, M., & Youngblood Henderson J. (2000). Protecting Indigenous knowledge and heritage: A global challenge. Saskatoon, SK: Purich Publishing.

Battiste, M. (2002). *Indigenous knowledge and pedagogy in First Nations education: A literature review with recommendations.* (Prepared for the National Working Groups on Education and the Minister of Indian Affairs (INAC)). Retrieved from http://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/education/24._2002_oct_marie_battiste_indigenousknowledgeandpedagogy_lit_review_for_min_working_group.pdf

Battiste, M. (2005). *Indigenous knowledge: Foundations for First Nations. (*Prepared for the World Indigenous nations Higher Education Consortium). Retrieved from http://www.win-hec.org/docs/pdfs/Journal/Marie%20Battiste%20copy.pdf

Battiste, M. (2009). Naturalizing Indigenous knowledge in Eurocentric education. *Canadian Journal of Native Education, 32*(1), 5-18.

Bazylak, D. (2002). Journeys to success: Perceptions of five female Aboriginal high school graduates. *Canadian Journal of Native Education, 26*(2), 134-151.

Belgarde, M., Mitchell, R., &Arquero, A. (2002). What do we have to do to create culturally responsive programs? The challenge of transforming American Indian teacher education. *Action in Teacher Education*, *24*(2), 42-54.

Bishop. A. (2002). *Becoming an ally: Breaking the cycle of oppression in people.* (2nd ed.). Halifax, NS: Fernwood Publishing.

Brant-Castellano, M., Davis, L., and Lahache, L. (Eds.). (2000). *Aboriginal education: Fulfilling the promise.* Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Britzman, D. (1998). *Lost subjects, contested objects: Toward a psychoanalytic inquiry of learning.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

Canada. Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. 1996. *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*. Ottawa, ON: Canada Communication Group.

Canadian Coalition for the Advancement of Aboriginal Studies (CAAS). (2002). *Learning about walking in beauty: Placing Aboriginal perspectives in Canadian classrooms.* A report from the Coalition for the Advancement of Aboriginal Studies (CAAS) presented to the Canadian Race Relations Foundation (CRRF). Retrieved from http://www.crr.ca/content/view/252/538/lang,english/

Canadian Council on Learning. (2007). *First Nations lifelong learning model.* Retrieved from http://www.ccl-cca.ca/pdfs/RedefiningSuccess/CCL_Learning_Model_FN.pdf

Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans,* December 2010.

Castagno, A. E., Brayboy, B., & McKinley, J. (2008). Culturally responsive schooling for Indigenous youth: A review of the literature. *Review of Educational Research 78*(4) 941-993).

Castellano, M, B. (2004). Ethics of Aboriginal research. *Journal of Aboriginal Health, 1*(1), 98-114.

Chase, S. E. (2005). Narrative inquiry: Multiple lenses, approaches, voices. In N. K. Denzin & Y. Lenkin (Eds.), *The sage handbook of qualitative research (3rd ed.),* (651-679). London, UK: Sage Publications.

Cherubini, L., Hodson, J., Manley-Casimir, M., & Muir, C. (2010). 'Closing the gap' at the peril of widening the void: Implications of the Ontario ministry of education's policy for aboriginal education. *Canadian Journal of Education, 33*(2), 329-355.

Cherubini, L. (2010). An analysis of Ontario aboriginal education policy: Critical and interpretive perspectives. *McGill Journal of Education, 45*(1), 9-26.

Chilisa, B. (2012). *Indigenous research methodologies.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Clandinin, J. & Connelly, M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Cohen, L. & Lotan, R. (2004). Equity in heterogenous classrooms. In Banks & Banks (Eds.), *Handbook of research on multicultural education.* (2nd ed.), (736-750). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches.* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Curwen Doige, L. A. (2003). A missing link: Between traditional Aboriginal education and the western system of education, *Canadian Journal of Native Education. 27*(2), 144-160.

Darder, A., Baltodano, M. & R. D. Torres. (Eds.). (2003). *The critical pedagogy reader.* New York, NY: RoutledgeFalmer.

Delpit, L. (1995). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom.* New York, NY: The New Press.

Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education: An introduction to the philosophy of education.* New York, NY: The Macmillan Company.

Diller, J., & Moule, J. (2005). *Cultural competence: A primer for educators.* Belmont, CA: Thomas/Wadsworth.

Dion Fletcher, S. (2000). Molded images: First Nations people, representation and the Ontario school curriculum. In T. Goldstein & D. Selbey (Eds.), *Weaving connections: Educating for peace, social, and environmental justice* (342-364). Toronto, ON: Sumach Press.

Dion, S. D. (2009). *Braiding histories: Learning from Aboriginal people' experiences and perspectives.* Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Dion, S. D., Johnson, K. & Rice, C. M. (2010). Decolonizing our schools: Aboriginal education in the Toronto district school board. Toronto.

Elbaz, Luwish, F. (2007). Studying teachers' lives and experiences: Narrative inquiry into K-12 teaching. In J. Clandinin (Ed.), *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology.* (357-382). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Eubanks, P. (2004). Poetics and narrativity: How texts tell stories. In C. Bazerman and P. Prior (Eds.), *What writing does and how it does it: An introduction to analyzing texts and textual practices.* (33-56). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Foucault, M. (1975). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison.* New York, NY: Random House.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* New York, NY: Herder and Herder.

Fuzessy, C. (2003). An investigation of teachers' role definitions in Nunavik. *Canadian Journal of Native Education, 27*(2), 195-207.

Giroux, H. (1983). *Theory and resistance in education.* New York, NY: Bergin and Garvey Publishers.

Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks.* International Publishers.

Goulet, L. (2001). Two teachers of Aboriginal students: Effective practice in sociohistorical realities. *Canadian Journal of Native Education, 25*(1), 68-82.

Greene, M. (2003). In search of a critical pedagogy. In A. Darder, M. Baltodano, & R. D. Torres (Eds.), *The critical pedagogy reader* (97-112). New York, NY: RoutledgeFalmer.

Haig-Brown, C. (1992). Choosing border work. *Canadian Journal of Native Education, 19*(1), 96-116.

Hare, J. (2011). The way of the warrior: Indigenous youth navigating the challenges of schooling. *Canadian Journal of Education, 34*(2), 93-111.

Harper, H. (2000). White women teaching in the north: Problematic identity on the shores of Hudson Bay. In N. M. Rodriguez & L. E. Villaverde (Eds.), *Dismantling white privilege: Pedagogy, politics and whiteness* (127-143). New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Harris, S. (1990). *Two-way Aboriginal schooling: Education and cultural survival.* Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press.

Hewitt, D. (2000). A clash of worldviews: Experiences from teaching Aboriginal students. *Theory into Practice 39*(2), 111-117.

Heyden, R. & Iannacci, L. (2008). *Early childhood curricula and the de-pathologizing of childhood.* Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

Heydon, R. & Stooke, R. (2012). Border work: Teachers' expressions of their literacy-related professional development needs in a First Nations school. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 28*(1), 11-20.

Hooley, N. (2002). Two-way enquiry learning: Exploring the interface between Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowing. Monograph, Victoria University of Technology.

Hooley, N. (2007). *Recognizing the power of story: Narrative prospects for democratic practitioner research.* British Educational Research Association Annual Conference. Institute of Education, University of London, September 5-8.

Hostetler, K. (2005). What is "good" education research? *Educational Researcher, 34*(6), 16-21.

Ireland, B. (2009). *"Moving from the head to the heart"—Addressing the 'Indian's Canada problem' in reclaiming the learning spirit: Aboriginal learners in education.* (ISBN assigned). Retrieved from University of Saskatchewan, Aboriginal Education Research Centre website: www.aerc.usask.ca

Kanu, Y. (2005). Teachers' perceptions of the integration of Aboriginal culture into the high school curriculum. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research. 51*(1), 50-67.

Kincheloe, J. L. & Steinberg, S. R. (2008). Indigenous knowledges in education: Complexities, dangers, and profound benefits. In N. K. Denzin, Y.S. Lincoln, & L. T. Smith (Eds.), *Handbook of critical and indigenous methodologies* (135-156). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Kumashio, K. (2002). *Troubling education: Queer activism and antioppressive pedagogy.* New York, NY: RoutledgeFalmer.

Kovach, M. (2009). *Indigenous methodologies: Characteristics, conversations, and contexts.* Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

Leavitt, R. (1995). Language and cultural content in Native education. In M. Battiste & J. Barman (Eds.), *First Nations education in Canada: The circle unfolds* (124-138). Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Lincoln, Y. S. & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

McLaren, P. (2003). Critical pedagogy: A look at the major concepts. In A. Darder, M. Baltodano, & R. D. Torres (Eds.), *The critical pedagogy reader*. (69-96). New York, NY: RoutledgeFalmer.

McLaren, P. & Jaramillo, N. (2007). *Pedagogy and praxis.* Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Moll, L. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory into Practice*, *31*(2), 132-141.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods.* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Pinar, W. F. (2008). *Understanding curriculum: An introduction to the study of historical and contemporary curriculum discourses.* New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Pinnegar, S., & Daynes, J. (2007). Locating narrative inquiry historically: Thematics in the turn to narrative. In J. Clandinin (Ed.), *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology.* (3-34.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Regan, P. (2010). *Unsettling the settler within: Indian residential schools, truth telling, and reconciliation in Canada.* Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Schissel, B., & Wotherspoon, T. (2003). *The legacy of school for aboriginal people: Education, oppression, and emancipation*. Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press.

Sillin, S., & Leija, A. (2006). *"How can the nation's high schools respond to the needs of Native American students?"* Issue Paper (Council of Chief State School Officers, Strengthening Partnerships for American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian Students Education Project, May 2006), 4. Retrieved from http://www.csso.org/projects/Native_American_Student_Education/Resources.

Skinner, L. (1999). Teaching through traditions: Incorporating Native languages and cultures into curricula. In K. Swisher & J. Tippeconnic (Eds.), *Next steps: Research and practice to advance Indian education* (107-134). Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools.

Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples.* London, UK: Zed Books.

Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Stake, R. E (2005). Qualitative case studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. Lenkin (Eds.), *The sage handbook of qualitative research (3rd ed.).* (443-465). London, UK: Sage Publications.

Stanley, C. (2010, January 15). Aboriginal student learning at a critical juncture. *Inspire: The Journal of Literacy and Numeracy for Ontario,* 1-3. Retrieved from http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/equity/aboriginal_Jan15.html

Statistics Canada. (2006). *2006 Profile of Aboriginal children, youth, and adults.* Retrieved from http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/89-635/index.cfm?lang=eng

St. Denis, V. (2007). Aboriginal education and anti-racist education: Building alliances across cultural and racial identity. *Canadian Journal of Education 30*(4), 1068-1092.

St. Denis, V. (2011). Silencing Aboriginal curricular content and perspectives through multiculturalism: "There are other children here", *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies, 33*(4), 306-317

Taylor, J. (1995). Non-Native teachers teaching in Native communities. In M. Battiste, & J. Barman (Eds.), *First Nations education in Canada: The circle unfolds* (224-242). Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Thompson Rivers University. (2010). *A handbook for educators of Aboriginal students.* Retrieved from http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/aboriginal/docs/educator-resources/TRU-Handbook-for-Educators-of-Aboriginal-Students.pdf

Wink, J. (1997). *Critical pedagogy: Notes from the real world.* White Plains, NY: Longman.

Wotherspoon, T. (2006). Teachers' work in Canadian Aboriginal communities. *Comparative Education Review, 50*(4), 672-694.

Appendix A

Interview Guide Questions for Post-Secondary Male and Female Aboriginal Students

1. What are you currently majoring in at school?
2. How did you come to choose that area of study?
3. Were there specific experiences that influenced your decision to study _____?
4. Where did you attend elementary school and high school?
5. What is your Ancestral background?
6. While attending elementary and secondary school did you identify yourself according to your Ancestral background? If not, why not?
7. How would you describe your schooling experiences?
8. Did you enjoy going to school?
9. What classes did you enjoy most in school?
10. What was it that you liked most about _____?
11. What would you describe as the biggest challenge or obstacle you had to overcome throughout your schooling?
12. In looking back at your schooling experiences, how would you describe the level of support you received from teachers?
13. How would you describe your relationships with teachers?

14. When you walked through the doors of your school (or classroom) what would you see?

15. Did self-identifying yourself as _____ affect how you were treated by teachers?

16. Was there ever a time throughout your schooling experiences where you felt misunderstood by a teacher(s)?

17. In what ways did teachers show their respect toward students?

18. How would you describe the representation of Aboriginal perspectives in your classes?

If the answer is NO to representation of Aboriginal perspectives…

19. What do you think prevented teachers from incorporating more Aboriginal content into their teaching?

20. What effect did this have on your cultural identity?

If the answer is YES to representation of Aboriginal perspectives…

21. What kinds of things did you learn about?

22. How did teachers' lessons contribute to your learning of Aboriginal perspectives?

23. What effect did this have on your cultural identity?

24. What was the response from other students of introducing Aboriginal perspectives in the classroom?

25. Did teachers invite community members or Elders to your classes?

26. What do you think is the reason why some teachers make more of an effort to incorporate Aboriginal perspectives into their teaching than others?

27. What would you like to see change/happen/stay the same in schools concerning Aboriginal perspectives?

Appendix B

Interview Guide for Focus Groups with Teachers

First Round of Focus Group Interviews

Demographic/background of teachers

- Years of experience
- Grades/subjects taught
- Involvement in school activities

How does the school acknowledge/recognize/celebrate Aboriginal culture and history?

- Events
- Professional development opportunities
- Curriculum expectations
- Access to culturally responsive resources and materials
- Establishment of safe spaces/support staff for Aboriginal students
- Collaborative relationships with nearby Aboriginal communities

How would you describe the relationship between Aboriginal students and non-Aboriginal teachers in your school?

- In class/courses
- Through extra-curricular activities
- Level of expectations held by teachers of Aboriginal students
- The use of inclusive/respectful language
- Actions
- Staff attitudes towards students
- Students' attitudes toward teachers

What does it mean to create a culturally sensitive schooling environment for Aboriginal students?

- What does it look like in the classroom?
- How is it defined by: teachers and administrators, students, community members
- opportunities to learn and interact with people across cultures
- affirming students' cultural identity

Second Round of Focus Group Interviews (drawing from student interview data)

Representation of Indigenous knowledge and Aboriginal content in teachers' practices and instruction:

- current strengths/weaknesses
- Response from students
- What is being incorporated/excluded
- Partnerships with community members
- Support from administration
- Teachers' current knowledge of Aboriginal issues and content.
- Reasons why some teachers make more of an effort to incorporate Aboriginal perspectives into their teaching than others

What do you think prevents teachers from incorporating more Aboriginal content into their teaching?

- Lack of confidence in their ability to learn and change
- Access to resources
- Time restraints
- Stereotypes of Aboriginal students as 'at-risk'
- Lack of professional community among colleagues

What would you like to see happen/change/stay the same within your current school environment?

- Professional development opportunities
- Mentoring opportunities
- Course related changes
- Relationships with staff
- Expectations of staff and students
- Community contact/involvement
- Changes to school policy

What does it mean to decolonize schooling?

- Knowledge related
- Attitudes toward teachers' work
- Feelings toward self and among and between other cultures
- Impact on students
- Courses
- Activities

Appendix C

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Western Education

USE OF HUMAN SUBJECTS - ETHICS APPROVAL NOTICE

Review Number: 1108-3
Principal Investigator: Rosamund Stooke & Brent Debassige
Student Name: Sarah Burm
Title: *Working Toward Transformation and Change: Exploring non-Aboriginal Teachers' Experiences in Facilitating and Strengthening Students' Awareness of Indigenous Knowledge and Perspectives*
Expiry Date: May 31, 2012
Type: M.Ed. Thesis
Ethics Approval Date: September 13, 2011
Revision #:
Documents Reviewed & Approved: UWO Protocol, Letters of Information & Consent

This is to notify you that the Faculty of Education Sub-Research Ethics Board (REB), which operates under the authority of The University of Western Ontario Research Ethics Board for Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects, according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario has granted approval to the above named research study on the date noted above. The approval shall remain valid until the expiry date noted above assuming timely and acceptable responses to the REB's periodic requests for surveillance and monitoring information.

During the course of the research, no deviations from, or changes to, the study or information/consent documents may be initiated without prior written approval from the REB, except for minor administrative aspects. Participants must receive a copy of the signed information/consent documentation. Investigators must promptly report to the Chair of the Faculty Sub-REB any adverse or unexpected experiences or events that are both serious and unexpected, and any new information which may adversely affect the safety of the subjects or the conduct of the study. In the event that any changes require a change in the information/consent documentation and/or recruitment advertisement, newly revised documents must be submitted to the Sub-REB for approval.

[redacted]

2011-2012 Faculty of Education Sub-Research Ethics Board

Dr. Alan Edmunds	Faculty of Education (Chair)
Dr. John Barnett	Faculty of Education
Dr. Jason Brown	Faculty of Education
Dr. Farahnaz Faez	Faculty of Education
Dr. Wayne Martino	Faculty of Education
Dr. George Gadanidis	Faculty of Education
Dr. Elizabeth Nowicki	Faculty of Education
Dr. Immaculate Namukasa	Faculty of Education
Dr. Kari Veblen	Faculty of Music
Dr. Ruth Wright	Faculty of Music
	Faculty of Music
	Faculty of Education, Associate Dean, Graduate Programs & Research *(ex officio)*
Dr. Susan Rodger	Faculty of Education, UWO Non-Medical Research Ethics Board *(ex officio)*

The Faculty of Education
1137 Western Rd.
London, ON N6G 1G7

Karen Kueneman, Research Officer
Faculty of Education Building
kueneman@uwo.ca
519-661-2111, ext.88561 FAX 519-661-3029

Copy: Office of Research Ethics

Appendix D-1

Working Toward Transformation and Change: Exploring Non-**Aboriginal Teachers'** Experiences in Facilitating and Strengthening Students Awareness of Indigenous Knowledge and Aboriginal Perspectives

LETTER OF INFORMATION (for students)

My name is Sarah Burm and I am a Masters of Education student at the Faculty of Education at The University of Western Ontario. I am currently conducting research into how non-Aboriginal secondary school educators are facilitating and strengthening students' awareness of Indigenous knowledge and Aboriginal perspectives through their teaching instruction and I would like to invite you to participate in this study.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to investigate how non-Aboriginal teachers approach the task of facilitating Aboriginal perspectives in the classroom as well as look at how non-Aboriginal teachers explore their own beliefs and attitudes towards people from cultural groups different from their own.

If you agree to participate

If you agree to participate in this study you will be asked to participate in an individual interview. I will be audio-taping the entire interview and I will be transcribing the information collected. I recognize that you will have your own, unique experiences to share, and I want to ensure that there is opportunity for you to speak freely and openly about your schooling experience. I will ask you to reflect on the presence (or lack thereof) of Indigenous knowledge and Aboriginal

perspectives throughout your elementary and secondary schooling and how these representations have impacted your cultural identity, knowledge of Indigenous issues, as well as your understanding of yourself as a learner. With your permission, I will then present your story to a focus group made up of five to seven non-Aboriginal secondary school educators. Your story will be used to invite discussion regarding how non-Aboriginal educators are facilitating and strengthening awareness of Indigenous knowledge and Aboriginal perspectives within their own teaching instruction. The interview will take place on your school campus and will take approximately an hour and a half.

Confidentiality

In order to protect your confidentiality and anonymity in this study, all participant names and place locations will be removed from the interviews once collected. Interviews will be digitally recorded and transcribed and then all digitally recorded interviews will be permanently erased. Data will be stored in a locked office and confidentiality is guaranteed. Access to the data will be restricted to me and my supervisory committee.

Risks & Benefits

There are no known risks to participating in this study.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect to your academic status.

Questions

If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant you may contact the Office of Research Ethics at The University of Western Ontario. If you have any questions about this study, please contact Sarah Burm or Dr. Rosamund Stooke.

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

Sincerely,

Sarah Burm

Appendix D-2

Working Toward Transformation and Change: Exploring Non-Aborigi**nal Teachers'** Experiences in Facilitating and Strengthening Students Awareness of Indigenous Knowledge and Aboriginal Perspectives

LETTER OF INFORMATION (for teachers)

My name is Sarah Burm and I am a Masters of Education student at the Faculty of Education at The University of Western Ontario. I am currently conducting research into how non-Aboriginal secondary school educators are facilitating and strengthening students' awareness of Indigenous knowledge and Aboriginal perspectives through their teaching instruction and I would like to invite you to participate in this study.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to investigate how non-Aboriginal teachers approach the task of facilitating Aboriginal perspectives in the classroom as well as look at how non-Aboriginal teachers explore their own beliefs and attitudes towards people from cultural groups different from their own.

If you agree to participate

If you agree to participate in this study you will be asked to participate in a focus group interview with five to seven other non-Aboriginal secondary school teachers. I will be audio-taping the entire interview and will be transcribing the information collected. I will begin by asking a few broad, open-ended questions regarding your current school environment and how you are incorporating Indigenous knowledge and Aboriginal perspectives into your teaching practice. I

will then draw on the stories of Aboriginal post-secondary students regarding their past schooling experiences as a means for furthering discussion among the group. The focus group will meet once at ****** school for approximately two hours.

Confidentiality

The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither your name nor information which could identify you will be used in any publication or presentation of the study results. All information collected for the study will be kept confidential. In order to protect your confidentiality and anonymity in this study, all participant names and place locations will be removed from the interviews once collected. Interviews will be digitally recorded and transcribed and then all digitally recorded interviews will be permanently erased. Data will be stored in a locked office. Access to the data will be restricted to me and my supervisory committee.

Risks & Benefits

There are no known risks to participating in this study.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your employment status.

Questions

If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant you may contact the Office of Research Ethics at The University of Western Ontario. If you have any questions about this study, please contact Sarah Burm or Dr. Rosamund Stooke.

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

Sincerely,

Sarah Burm

Sarah Burm

EDUCATION

The University of Western Ontario
Master of Education – Education Studies 2012

University of Ottawa
Bachelor of Education 2008
Primary-Junior certification; accreditation Ontario College of Teachers

Wilfrid Laurier University
Bachelor of Arts, Honours Communication Studies 2007

EMPLOYMENT

Community Outreach Worker
Atlohsa Native Family Healing Services Present

Research Assistant, Dr. Greg Dickinson 2010-2012
The University of Western Ontario

Research Assistant, Dr. Julie Byrd-Clark 2010-2011
The University of Western Ontario

Elementary School Teacher 2008-2010
Attawapiskat First Nation Education Authority

AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Educational Bursary, Sisters of St. Joseph 2012

Western Graduate Research Scholarship 2010

Omushkego Education 2010 Excellence in Teaching Award 2010